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# BURGER NATION



**55** Whether simple or sophisticated, from a backyard grill or a fine restaurant, the hamburger brings immeasurable happiness. In these pages, *SAVEUR* chronicles this greatest of American inventions in all its glory: its history, its myths, its most legendary incarnations; and we tell you all you need to know about building the perfect burger, from the best toppings to the most luscious cheeses and the tastiest sauces. What's more, we've got recipes for some of the finest burgers we've ever tasted.

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Cover *A bacon cheeseburger*. PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL KRAUS

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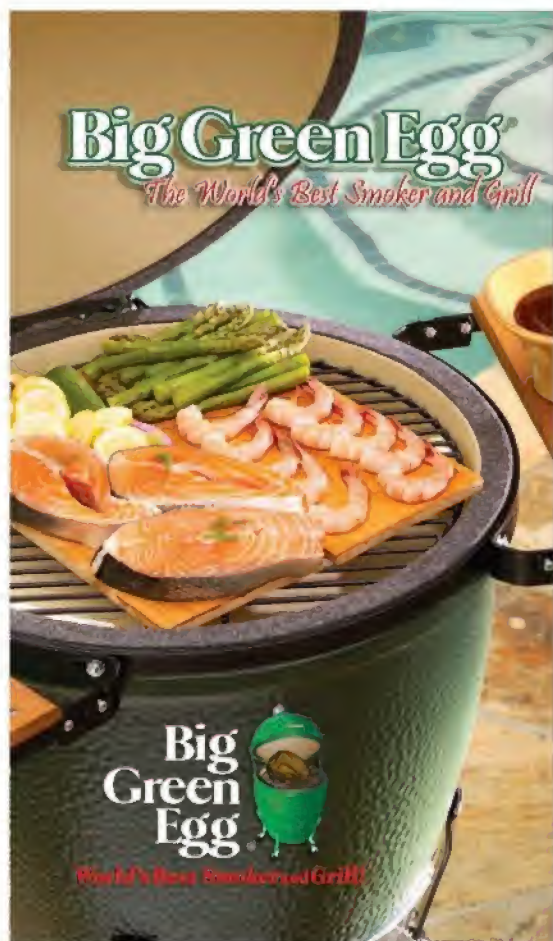
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## FIRST

# Burgers Are Us

This simple sandwich is everything we want it to be

**W**HEN I WAS GROWING UP in California in the 1970s, burger night happened once a month. Mom would set out all the fixings on the kitchen counter: crisp leaves of iceberg lettuce, thin-cut white onions, tomato slices, pillow-soft buns, a jar of mustard, a bottle of ketchup. Then she'd grill some thick ground-beef patties in a skillet while the rest of us hovered nearby. The moment the meat came off the heat, I'd take a plate and work my way along the counter, constructing the perfect hamburger. It was heaven.

So, too, was the pickle-topped hamburger I ordered with ritualistic frequency at McDonald's when I was a kid. And for that matter, so was the patty melt that I used to make myself for lunch. The bacon cheeseburger at the coffee shop around the block from my dad's office? That was heaven as well. Of all the burgers I devoured in my youth, though, the one I coveted the most was the one served at a red-sauce joint in San Francisco's Tenderloin district called Original Joe's. The first time I ordered that burger, it shattered all my preconceptions as to what a burger should be. The sandwich consisted of a hunk of Italian bread hewn in half to accommodate a medium-rare slab of ground beef topped with chopped, browned garlic and a pile of pickled peperoncini. It was a thing of beauty and gusto: reductive yet formidable, Italian on the outside but American at heart.

I've since had chili burgers, lamb burgers,

pineapple-topped burgers, foie gras-stuffed burgers, and, during my vegetarian years, plenty of sprout-topped veggie burgers. And they were *all* good. That's the thing about burgers: they're the ultimate culinary chameleon, changing themselves to adapt to every craving, every situation.

As we began putting together this issue's special feature, "Burger Nation", which kicks off on page 55, I started to realize just how firm a grip this deceptively simple food has on our collective imagination. Take Jeffrey Tennyson (the fellow in the picture at left), a New York-based artist and photographer who, in the 1980s and '90s, compiled a massive collection of hamburger-related ephemera, which he eventually turned into a book called *Hamburger Heaven* (Hyperion, 1995).

A telling moment for me occurred during a planning meeting with our executive editor, Dana Bowen, and executive food editor, Todd Coleman. We were in my office, poring over Jeffrey's fine book, when Dana suddenly said, "We *have* to have a hamburger. Now." So, at

four in the afternoon, we marched nine blocks south to Shake Shack, an esteemed burger stand in New York City's Madison Square Park. Minutes later, we had tasty burgers in our hot little hands. Craving satisfied.

APROPOS OF CRAVINGS, I encourage you to turn to page 22. There, you can learn about how to contribute your own ideas on food—burger related or otherwise—to be published in our forthcoming *SAVEUR* 100 Readers' Edition. We look forward to reading what great notions you'll bring to the table. —JAMES OSELAND, Editor-in-Chief



**The hamburger-ephemera collector Jeffrey Tennyson, above, circa 1992.**





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# FARE

Memories and Marvels from the World of Food, plus Agenda and More

## Home Grown

**M**ANY CHEFS DREAM of someday owning a patch of green where they can raise produce to supply their restaurant. The Chase family of Maine has done just that, you might say, in spades, only they went about it in reverse: they started as farmers and moved on to opening a popular market, bakery, and restaurant in the town of Belfast called Chase's Daily, where the offerings are so varied and compelling that many diners don't even realize that the menu is vegetarian.

As a produce market alone, Chase's Daily is an American treasure. The first time I visited, I entered the old brick building through the back door and was met by an airy, gallery-like space where wire crates overflowed with baby artichokes, okra, agretti (a bitter Italian green that I've never seen elsewhere), and many other items still damp with

Megan Chase, who helps run Chase's Daily restaurant in Belfast, Maine.



## FARE

morning dew. As I shopped, I detected a buttery, garlicky aroma emanating from the adjacent kitchen, which, I discovered when I sat down in the casual dining room, offers one of the most expansive farm-driven menus I've ever seen. There were freshly shelled soldier beans tossed with extra-virgin olive oil and parmigiano-reggiano shavings; crisp and chewy thin-crust pizzas topped with farmstead cheeses; an heirloom tomato-herb tart, rich with custard and baked into a flaky pâte brisée crust. I've been a regular ever since.

Penny and Addison Chase, who started a small farm about 20 miles from Belfast back in 1970, aren't the first or the only farmers to have taken up cooking (see "Outstanding in Their Field," below); homemade pies and jams have long been farm stand staples, and many farmers have upped the ante in recent years by turning their raw

products into ice creams, barbecue, even Tex-Mex take-out food. But the Chases have elevated the notion by proving that destination farm-to-table dining, so in vogue these days, needn't be the domain solely of fancy chefs.

It all started, Addison Chase says, with the baked goods that his daughter Phoebe used to make at home and sell alongside the family's produce at the local farmers' market. She wanted to open a place where she could broaden her selection, so in 1996, when a 19th-century brick meeting hall on Main Street went up for sale, the Chases bought it. The space was lofty, with a high, punched-tin ceiling and big front windows: clearly too big for a simple bakery. So, the extra room in the back became a retail produce market; before long, their other daughter, Megan, an artist, was supplying paintings for the walls, and her

husband, Ted LaFage, was cooking breakfast dishes made with the morning's harvest. Then came lunch service; then Friday dinners where the family members (who, except for Penny and Ted, are vegetarians) assembled to cook more-ambitious dishes like saag paneer and fresh buckwheat pasta with braised cabbage and fontina. The place became a neighborhood hangout; people came from all over for the ever changing menu, which is simple but worldly—you're as apt to find the Chases' napa cabbage in a sichuan peppercorn-spiked salad as in a slaw.

Today the farming, cooking, and serving are still largely a family affair. "There's no single manager," says Addison. "We get together Saturday afternoons to discuss what foods are coming in and what we're going to do." Talk about allowing a business to evolve organically. —Nancy Harmon Jenkins



### MIXED GREEN SALAD WITH SICHUAN PEPPERCORNS

SERVES 4

This boldly flavored and refreshing late-summer salad (above) is based on one served at Chase's Daily in Belfast, Maine.

- 1½ **tblsp. finely chopped ginger**
- 1 **tblsp. tamari**
- 1 **tblsp. rice vinegar**
- 2 **tblsp. Asian sesame oil**
- 2 **tblsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 **tblsp. fresh orange juice**
- 1 **tsp. chile oil**
- 1 **tsp. sichuan peppercorns** (see page 108)
- 6 **cups loosely packed mixed Asian salad greens, like mizuna and tatsoi**
- 3 **cups thinly sliced napa cabbage**
- 4 **small red radishes, thinly sliced crosswise**
- 3 **radishes, quartered lengthwise**
- ½ **medium carrot, julienned**
- 1 **kohlrabi, cut into matchsticks**
- Thai basil leaves, for garnish**
- Cilantro leaves, for garnish**
- Mint leaves, for garnish**

Combine the first seven ingredients in a small bowl. Heat an 8" skillet over medium heat. Add the peppercorns and cook, swirling the pan constantly, until the peppercorns are toasted and fragrant, about 1 minute. Transfer peppercorns to a spice grinder and grind into a fine powder. Whisk ground peppercorns into dressing. In a large bowl combine greens, cabbage, and vegetables and toss with the dressing. Serve the salad garnished with basil, cilantro, and mint.

## Outstanding in Their Field

Shopping at farm stands is one of summer's greatest pleasures. Dining at them is even better. Below are six that serve great homegrown fare.

**THE BUNTEN FARM AND FARMHOUSE KITCHEN**, Orford, New Hampshire ([www.thebuntenfarm.com](http://www.thebuntenfarm.com)) After Christine Balch and her husband, Bruce, a chef, purchased her family's 200-acre farm in 2005, they turned the property's old carriage shed into a restaurant, where they serve homemade cheeses, meats, and breads alongside dishes like fettuccine with house-made gouda and mozzarella.

**CEDAR CIRCLE FARM**, East Thetford, Vermont ([www.cedarcirclefarm.org](http://www.cedarcirclefarm.org)) This organic farm's Dinners in the Field series, which invites chefs to serve multi-course meals at linen-draped tables overlooking the Connecticut River, sells out early, but you can always have

fresh baked goods like rosemary chocolate chip cookies in the farm's café or sign up for its cooking classes.

**GATHERING TOGETHER FARM**, Philomath, Oregon ([www.gatheringtogetherfarm.com](http://www.gatheringtogetherfarm.com)) John Eveland and Sally Brewer use their dome-shaped earthen oven to make pizzas topped with house-cured pepperoni, pickled apples, and homegrown arugula, as well as other foods, which they serve in a rustic space.

**JOE HUBER FAMILY FARM & RESTAURANT**, Starlight, Indiana ([www.joehubers.com](http://www.joehubers.com)) Visitors regularly make the 25-minute drive from Louisville, Kentucky, to this family-run farm for from-scratch fare: biscuits with apple butter, chicken and dumplings, and vegetable sides.

**MCENROE ORGANIC FARM**, Millerton, New York (518/789-3252) One of the best burgers in the Hudson Valley is grilled to order on this farm market's front porch; each one is made with the farm's own grass-fed beef. The kitchen rolls out a fine spread, including farm-fresh salads, sandwiches, and desserts.

**SWANTON BERRY FARM**, Davenport, California ([www.swantonberryfarm.com](http://www.swantonberryfarm.com)) Jim Cochran's central California farm stand, housed in a converted army barracks overlooking the Pacific, is a local landmark and social scene. Kids play board games while spooning up strawberry shortcake, and cyclists roll in from Highway 1 to recharge with homemade soups. —Kristen Miglore





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## FARE

# Welsh Wonder

**I**F THE ORIGINAL makers of caerphilly could see their cheese now—sitting in glass cases at gourmet markets across Britain and the United States—they wouldn't believe their eyes. Theirs, unlike long-aged cheddar or assertive stilton, had never been a fancy cheese. Caerphilly was a simple, brined wheel of cows' milk that Welsh dairy farmers had been making since the early 1800s. It was a fresh, milky cheese, the kind workers would have for lunch with a pint of beer. And now, after an absence of nearly a hundred years, real handmade caerphilly (below) has returned to Wales—and, you might say, in a rather grander style than when it left.

The production of old-style caerphilly largely ceased in Wales in 1914, when Welsh cheese makers were forced to stop their work because of wartime restrictions. Those were dark days for British cheese, when farmhouse methods were mostly abandoned in the name of progress. You could buy a fresh cheese called caerphilly in England after the world wars, but it came from English factory

creameries, not Welsh farms; in fact, industrial creameries loved caerphilly because they didn't have to age the cheese and could turn a profit on it quickly. By the 1950s, it had become a supermarket staple in England and nothing like the more nuanced cheese that Welsh farmers used to make.

All the while, though, a few stubborn cheese makers in Somerset, England, which borders Wales, had been carrying on the business of crafting caerphilly the traditional way, cutting the curds by hand and, in some cases, letting the wheels age until they developed a flavorful rind and a complex-tasting, creamy interior. In 1979, Randolph Hodgson, the founder of the venerable London cheese shop Neal's Yard Dairy, tasted some of that aged caerphilly, produced by a third-generation Somerset cheese maker named Chris Duckett. He fell in love, and soon so did his customers. In England, aged caerphilly began to take its place in the pantheon of British cheeses alongside cheddar and stilton.

But you still couldn't get it from Wales. Then, in the mid-1990s, a former Neal's Yard employee named Todd Trethowan decided it was time to bring real caerphilly home. Trethowan worked with Chris Duckett to learn the old method, and in 1996 he started making caerphilly at his parents' Gorwydd farm in the Welsh town of Llanddewi Brefi. He aged it for an average of two to three months; the result had a marvelously creamy texture and an earthy taste. Today Gorwydd caerphilly is coveted by connoisseurs all over Britain and, more important, well loved in its native land. (See *THE PANTRY*, page 108, for a source.)

—Francis Percival



## AGENDA

AUGUST

8

### GREAT TASTE OF THE MIDWEST

Madison, Wisconsin

Set on the scenic shore of Lake Monona, this beer festival features more than 600 beers and cask ales from 100 Midwestern breweries, as well as a dunk tank (the victims: brewers and beer journalists) and wandering musicians. Fortify yourself with liverwurst sandwiches, pizza, and Chicago-style hot dogs. Information: [www.mhtg.org/great-taste-of-the-midwest](http://www.mhtg.org/great-taste-of-the-midwest).



AUGUST

21

### THE JOY OF SAKE

Honolulu, Hawaii

At the largest sake-tasting event in the United States, sip from a tantalizing selection of junmais, ginjos, honjizos, and other traditional styles of Japanese rice wine. More than 300 varieties of sake are on offer, along with an array of appetizers; last year's fare included braised pork belly, whitefish sashimi, and grilled oysters. Information: [www.joyofsake.com](http://www.joyofsake.com).

AUGUST

23

### VERMONT CHEESEMAKERS FESTIVAL

Shelburne, Vermont

Join 35 of the Green Mountain State's artisanal cheese makers for a day of tastings, seminars, farm visits, and demonstrations. Learn how to make your own cheddar cheese and how to pair hundreds of handmade cheeses with everything from microbrews to maple syrups. Information: [www.vtcheese fest.com](http://www.vtcheese fest.com).

SEPTEMBER

19-27

### KUTA KARNIVAL

Bali, Indonesia

This spirited, food-focused beach carnival was inaugurated by local businesses in Bali in 2002. Sixty vendors cook a wide range of Indonesian specialties; a highlight of the fare on offer is the babi guling (Balinese-style roasted suckling pig stuffed with garlic, lemongrass, and cassava leaves). Information: [www.kutakarnival.com](http://www.kutakarnival.com).



SEPTEMBER

21

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## FARE



## Bangkok's Banquet

When I moved to Bangkok after college in 1999, I got a crash course in Thai food out on the street. All across the metropolis, and even in the suburbs where I first lived, vendors prepare a mind-blowing variety of dishes at outdoor food stalls, where families, businesspeople, and students converge to eat. Keen to learn as much as possible, I started seeking out the best street food and photographing my discoveries (you can view them on my blog at [www.austinbushphotography.com](http://www.austinbushphotography.com)), whether in Chinatown, at the weekend flea market called Suan Chatuchak, or at any one of the city's clusters of mobile kitchens. A decade later, I'm still amazed by what I find.

Noodle vendors ❶ were my first love: most

serve multiple options, from phat thai (rice noodles fried with egg and dried shrimp) to bamee (an egg noodle soup). I often gravitate to kuay-tiao reua ❷, "boat noodles", so named because they used to be sold from boats on the canals of central Thailand. A satisfying tangle of rice noodles and pak boong (water spinach) with pork, beef, and fish balls in a dark, herb-infused broth, it's a one-dish feast.

Another of my standbys is khao mok ❹, or biryani, a rice dish sold predominantly by Thai Muslim vendors from the country's south. Flavored with turmeric and other spices and cooked with tender pieces of chicken, it's usually served with fried onions, cucumbers, and a sweet vin-

egar-based sauce. Damn, it's good.

Bangkok's most iconic street food is the green papaya salad called som tam. I love the Isan-style version (from Thailand's northeast) ❸, which is brightened with chiles and fermented fish. The vendors who sell it often also serve my other weakness: kai yang ❷: chicken marinated with white pepper and coriander root and grilled over smoldering coals.

But it is the makeshift buffets called raan khao kaeng ❹, or rice and curry stalls, where I still encounter dishes I haven't seen before. Whether it's a stir-fry or a curry, it's all the proof I need that eating in Bangkok is an ongoing education. —Austin Bush



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## FARE

# A Fish Tale



The author's grandmother Bertha Altman in 1951.

**M**Y LATE UNCLE Marvin Gordon, who was nobody's fool, believed that food should be exactly what it claims to be;

he loathed anything that turned up on a menu enclosed in quotation marks or prefaced by the word *mock*. So, the first time his future mother-in-law—my grandmother Bertha Altman—served him bailik fish in her Brooklyn kitchen, back in the 1930s, Uncle Marvin surely thought the wool was being pulled over his eyes, for bailik fish isn't made with fish at all; it's made with chicken. But my grandmother, like her mother before her, had been turning out the poached dumplings for years, serving them as an inexpensive and milder-flavored alternative to gefilte fish, those cold fish dumplings that show up faithfully on big Jewish holidays like Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Passover.

I have my own memories of my grandmother standing alongside my dad in that same Brooklyn kitchen in the 1980s, both of them hand-grinding pieces of boneless, skinless chicken breast into a bowl and mixing in eggs, matzo meal, and white pepper before shaping the quenelle-like dumplings and dropping them into a wobbly stockpot with a dented bottom. Just like gefilte fish, her bailik fish was always served chilled, along with a dollop of horseradish and a slice of the carrot that the dumplings had been cooked with. The delicacy remains a favorite in my family today.

I've found no written documentation of the origins of bailik fish (also known as false fish and gefilte chicken), but, according to my late father and other self-appointed experts on the subject, the dish was devised

by Jewish cooks of old who lived in places where freshwater fish like whitefish, carp, and pike—the traditional components of gefilte fish—weren't readily available. Another theory has it that chicken was simply more plentiful, and therefore less expensive, than fish in your typical Eastern European shtetl. The dish's name seems to support that version of

**W** A recipe for bailik fish at [SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE122](http://SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE122)

the story: *bailik* may be an adaptation of the Yiddish word *bilig*, which means cheap. But my 91-year-old aunt Thelma Gordon (Uncle Marvin's wife) has a different explanation, which can be attributed to years of hands-on experience making Jewish holiday food: it's easier to get kids to eat bailik fish than the real deal. —Elissa Altman

COURTESY ELISSA ALTMAN



Six



ingredients



counting



## FARE

# Hometown Hero

**M**OST OF THE coal mines have closed around Johnstown, Pennsylvania, but one local resource continues to sustain the townspeople: the legendary, lunch box–friendly Gob. Two hockey puck–size rounds of chocolate cake joined by a layer of creamy filling, a Gob might appear to be a whoopie pie by another name, but that would be a coarse interpretation. A Facebook fan page maintained by displaced Johnstownians around the country offers some insight into just what sets the Gob apart. A post from Las Vegas claims it's the hint of cinnamon in the chocolate cake; another, from Cleveland, confidently states, "Crack. It has to be."

While seemingly every grandmother in town has a homemade



version of the treat, purists insist that the one produced by Johnstown's own Yost's Dutch Maid Bakery is the only true Gob. A Dutch Maid Gob has a yellow filling and a cellophane wrapper bearing a picture of a sailor alongside the slogan "They Eat'em Up". Owner Tim Yost purchased the recipe and the rights to the name

in 1980 from Harris & Boyar, another local bakery, whose owners claimed to have invented the treat sometime in the 1920s. It seems more likely that Harris & Boyar adapted what was already a regional favorite, itself possibly inspired by the cream-filled whoopie pies of Pennsylvania Dutch country, in the eastern part of the state. The name is thought to refer either to lumps of coal, called gobs by miners, for whom the cake was once a lunchtime fixture, or to the fellow pictured on the package: *gob* is also slang for sailor.

Other bakeries should be so lucky as to have a following as loyal as Dutch Maid's. "I won't even touch a homemade gob," says Jo Novelli, a Phoenix-based artist and Johnstown native currently working on a video documentary about the food. It's called *Home Is Where the Gob Is*. —Beth Kracklauer

## One Good Bottle

Austrian rieslings can be magnificent: taut, tingling, and full-bodied, all at the same time. I especially love the crisp, lean rieslings produced in the Kamptal region, particularly the ones labeled "Urgestein". The name, which means prehistoric rocks, is a reference to the stony soil in which the grapes for these wines grow. Urgestein rieslings have a laser-beam minerality and go wonderfully with rich foods, from curries to foie gras. An excellent one is the 2007 Schloss Gobelsburg Riesling Urgestein (\$24); it has a lovely, lime-lemongrass-loquat nose and an array of mouth-filling, almost peachy flavors, along with all that zingy acidity for which this region's rieslings are known. (See *THE PANTRY*, page 108, for a source.)

—David Rosengarten



FROM LEFT: ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN; TODD COLEMAN



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## ESSAY

## Points of Departure

The best recipes not only instruct; they inspire

BY AMY MCDANIEL

**W**HEN I WAS LEARNING TO cook during my teenage years, I let recipes make all the decisions for me. In cookbooks and magazines (including this one), I gravitated to recipes that laid out each step with clinical precision. A frequent companion in those days was the 1975 edition of *Joy of Cooking*. The clear, accessible recipes, written by Irma Rombauer and her daughter, Marion Rombauer Becker, spoke to me, and what they said was “You can do this.” Then, perusing *Joy* one day, I came across the introduction to a recipe for eggplant casserole. In it, the authors write, “This ends up looking in color like a very successful Braque still-life.” What flourish of whimsy was this? I paused, envisaging the French cubist’s layering of line, form, and color. Suddenly, the authors were giving me something more than a list of instructions. They were suggesting, “Use your imagination.”


I’ve since come to admire recipe writers who invite a cook not just to follow their directions but to conjure a world from their words. Take Elizabeth David, the British food writer of the post–World War II years who,

my wits and my senses in this way, cooking is as much about the process as it is about the product. I’m becoming the capable cook that David, by her very tone, presumes that I am.

Such recipes tug at the spirit; they inspire with poetic or playful turns of phrase. “The duck will be cooked in an hour unless it is a very old duck indeed,” writes Alice B. Toklas in a recipe for duck in port wine in *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*. Throughout that memoir–cum–recipe book, published in 1954, Toklas gives ingredients and acts of cooking life and dimension. For a savory pumpkin pie, she advises, “Put into the hole in the centre as much heavy cream as the pie will accept, about a cupful, if the pie is inclined in all directions.” This is delightful to read and also instructive, in its way: cooking is, Toklas acknowledges, a flexible and subjective art. We must observe and adapt.

By the time I was a graduate student in creative writing, I was eagerly seeking out recipes with attitude and literary verve. Most of the books I turned to were published before I was born, but I was especially taken with one contemporary example: *The Whole Beast: Nose to Tail Eating*, written with genuine warmth and wry humor by the British chef Fergus Henderson. First published in the United States in 2004, the book—a primer on cooking all manner of organs, ears, and feet as well as a good all-around cookbook—doesn’t patronize with strict prescriptions. Instead, it describes how ingredients should behave if you’re treating them right: in Henderson’s words, pumpkin bobs, roe curls up, soup blushes.

Throughout *The Whole Beast*, Henderson encourages real intimacy with the ingredients: he calls them “your borlotti beans,” “your trotters,” “your fishy white sauce”. Even if I’d never encountered those foods before, they were mine, I was assured, the moment I laid my hands on them. Henderson encouraged me to sharpen my senses, to dispense with thermometers and timers wherever I could. “After a while,” reads his recipe for mayonnaise, “you will learn the various noises mayonnaise makes in the making that tell you when you have enough oil. These are hard to describe in words so I’m afraid you just have to listen to it.”

Similarly, in Henderson’s recipe for hash, a savory mess of potatoes and leftover meat that he describes as “a very good dish if you are feeling a little dented”, no quantities are given. “I cannot tell how much you will have left over,” Henderson points out, “so we cannot be exact here.” Following that cue, I took plenty of latitude with the recipe, subtracting the eggs and even throwing in some carrots. A hearty aroma filled the kitchen, and, as I poked around for the tastiest browned morsels, I felt myself become markedly undented. I hadn’t followed Henderson’s recipe to the letter, but then, thankfully, that’s not the kind of cook he was asking me to be. 



with works like *Mediterranean Food* and *French Provincial Cooking*, awakened in her native England an appetite for such then exotic pleasures as basil, anchovies, salade niçoise, and paella. In sensual prose, David conveys a vivid impression of each dish she introduces and also something of its milieu. Of a cassoulet, she says, “The beans are tender, juicy, moist but not mushy...aromatic smells of garlic and herbs escape from the pot as the cassoulet is brought smoking hot from the oven to the table.” What’s more, David’s conversational style leaves space for me to cook according to my own judgment and the particular quirks of my kitchen. I’m advised to prepare a mutton ragoût in a “gentle oven”; a sauce for a dish of haricot beans should end up “thickish”. When I’m called upon to rely on

AMY MCDANIEL is a teacher and writer in Atlanta, Georgia.



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# INGREDIENT

## A World of Peppers

Chiles bring a lot more to the table than just heat

BY MARICEL E. PRESILLA PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES OSELAND

**W**HEN I BEGAN GROWING peppers in my New Jersey backyard, seven years ago, I tried to restrain my mad-collector instinct at first, planting only the hot cultivars I knew would take well to the region's warm, humid summers: fiery habaneros, natives of Mexico's Yucatán peninsula; floral-tasting scotch bonnets, the habanero's cousins from the Caribbean; and reliable jalapeños and serranos, the workhorses of Mexican cooking. But soon, encouraged by a bumper crop, I became more adventurous. Within three years I had graduated to about a hundred cultivars, most of them central to the cooking of the Americas, the birthplace of peppers. Now, during the summer, peppers occupy every sunny patch of soil in my backyard—a vista of beautiful, thriving plants bearing fruits as bright and dazzling as Christmas tree lights.

The experience has been a fascinating chapter in my long quest to understand the astonishing botanical diversity of the *Capsicum* genus, to which all peppers belong, and to explore the myriad ways in which cooks in my native Latin America have come to use these ingredients. The visual guide that appears on the following pages features 48 peppers, some well known in the United States and some obscure—a cross section representing a vast range of size, color, heat, and flavor. I've been able to grow them as seedlings from domestic purveyors and use them all interchangeably in my cooking. (See THE PANTRY, page 108, for sources.) In doing so I've gained an immense appreciation for the versatility of these fruits. They not only add heat to food but lend beguiling tastes and bring sweet, sour, and salty flavors into sharper focus, whether I'm using them in a slow-simmered Peruvian chicken stew, a tangy ceviche, or a fresh table salsa.

The study of chiles has given me a deeper understanding of Latin American cuisines, revealing, for example, how a preference for hot peppers among indigenous populations has profoundly shaped the cooking of Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, and Bolivia; how the Spanish inclination toward sweet varieties like the cubanelle and the ají dulce has helped define the cuisines of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, where pre-Columbian cultures have largely disappeared; and how an African penchant for fiery pepper condiments traveled back across the Atlantic to influence the foods of the Caribbean and Brazil.

It is no accident that peppers are the backbone of New World cooking: they originated in South America, probably in a region encompassing parts of Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, and Bolivia. The *Capsicum* genus,

a branch of the Solanaceae family, contains 31 known species, only five of which are domesticated. Over the centuries, those five species traveled from their places of origin; they were manipulated by farmers so they'd produce a kaleidoscopic array of subvarieties. The majority of cultivated peppers today are of the species *C. annuum*, which evolved from a tiny, devilishly hot wild pepper and now comprises most of the commercial peppers available in the United States, including jalapeños. *C. chinense* peppers exhibit a wide range of heat levels and, often, tropical-fruit and herbal notes. *C. baccatum* encompasses the most important cooking peppers in the Andes, like the fruity ají amarillo. *C. frutescens* peppers are generally small and slender, ripening to a bright red; they've found a special niche in Central America and other parts of the world. Finally, there are the Andean *C. pubescens* peppers, lovers of high elevations and cool climes; the species exhibits only a few pod types, of which the chubby rocoto (a mainstay of Peruvian and Bolivian cooking) is the best known.

All capsicums are fruits (technically berries) with a usually lustrous skin and a ribbed and seed-filled interior. All contain phenolic compounds called capsaicinoids, which account for their heat and are concentrated in the fruit's soft, pithy placenta. That heat can range from a mild, lingering tingle to a clean, sharp bite to a ferocious burn—sometimes in cultivars that look remarkably alike on the outside.

On first encountering capsicums in the Greater Antilles, Spanish explorers dubbed them pimientos, no doubt because their piquancy reminded them of black pepper (pimienta). Eventually, they also took to calling them chiles, after the Nahuatl word for peppers, *chilli*, which they learned while conquering Mexico. Adding to the confusion, many Spanish settlers also adopted the indigenous Caribbean Taíno word *ají*, which they disseminated throughout South America. When I speak or write of capsicums generally in English, I use just *pepper*; in Spanish, I'm more discerning, favoring the predominant term for peppers in whatever country I'm writing about: *chile*, *ají*, *pimiento*, and so on. For the peppers in the visual guide, I've used the most widely accepted commercial names.

Today, capsicums, which spread far and wide along expanding trade routes after the Spanish and Portuguese conquests, are deeply woven into the fabric of culinary life in many parts of the world, especially Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent. It is in their natal Latin America, though, that they find their most diverse expression.



**A chile de agua, above, one of thousands of capsicums used in Latin American cooking. An illustrated guide begins on page 28.**

Contributing editor MARICEL E. PRESILLA is the author of *The New Taste of Chocolate* (Ten Speed Press, 2009).





#### AJÍ AMARILLO

Believed to have originated in Peru, this intensely fruity, moderately hot, and complexly flavored pepper is about six inches long when mature. The ají amarillo is a favorite in Peru and Bolivia and a great all-purpose cooking pepper (see the recipe for Peruvian chicken stew on page 34). (*C. baccatum*.)



#### AJÍ CABALLERO

This inch-long Caribbean pepper is often sold commercially in the United States under the name Puerto Rican jelly bean, and it packs a mighty heat. Puerto Ricans pickle it in vinegar, garlic, and other ingredients to make a hot sauce called pique, which, like Tabasco, is often brought to the table to garnish foods. (*C. annum*.)



#### AJÍ CRISTAL

The four-inch "crystal pepper" is named for the translucent luster of the unripe fruit's skin. In Chilean cooking, it plays a role similar to that of the jalapeño and the serrano, serving as an ingredient in table salsas like chancho en piedra, a mix of tomatoes, onions, cilantro, and peppers crushed in a stone mortar. (*C. baccatum*.)



#### AJÍ DULCE

Deeply herbal, fruity, and musky, this tiny, lantern-shaped sweet pepper exemplifies the extraordinary range of heat exhibited by the *C. chinense* species. It is a cornerstone of the cuisines of the Hispanic Caribbean countries (see the recipe for shrimp ceviche on page 32). (*C. chinense*.)



#### BOLIVIAN HABANERO

This plum-size, very hot Bolivian pepper can be used to make a delicious red onion relish flavored with bitter oranges. The combination creates a tongue-tickling acidity that's a perfect accompaniment to crisp-skinned Bolivian-style pork with roasted potatoes and sweet, Andean yam-like tubers such as oca. (*C. chinense*.)



#### BOLIVIAN RAINBOW

This multicolor Bolivian pepper, which is usually about half an inch long when harvested, is typically sold as an ornamental, but when added raw to salsas or as a finishing touch to a cooked dish, it lends lively color and a strong jolt of clean heat, if not a particularly complex flavor. (*C. frutescens*.)



#### CARIBBEAN RED

Ripening to a rich, orangey red, this one-and-a-half-inch-long, scorchingly hot peppers—it's twice as hot as many of its notoriously pungent *C. chinense* cousins—can be identified by its distinctive, pointy tip. Used sparingly, it gives a pronounced aromatic dimension and bracing heat to fresh salsas. (*C. chinense*.)



#### CASCABEL

This pretty, plum-size Mexican chile is moderately hot. When mature, it is a burgundy red and, when dried, becomes a very dark reddish brown and rattles if shaken—which accounts for its name, which means jingle bell in Spanish. Fresh cascabels lend strong tannic notes to table salsas and cooked sauces. (*C. annum*.)



#### CHILE DE ÁRBOL

With its elegant curve and pointy tip, this two-and-a-half-inch-long, very hot Mexican chile has a smooth, brittle skin and clean taste. It is a favorite in table sauces made with tomatoes and tomatillos. I love the bold heat of dried chiles de árbol in hot chocolate. (*C. annum*.)



#### CHILTEPÍN

In the arid Mexican state of Sonora, cooks gather tiny, wild-growing chiltepín peppers between the months of September and January and add the coffee bean-size chiles to both cooked dishes and tableside condiments. Often sun-dried, the chiltepín delivers a megaton of heat. (*C. annum*.)



#### CHOCOLATE HABANERO

The name of this chubby, two-inch-wide Caribbean habanero refers to the rich, dark hue of its skin and not to its taste, which is all about heat, not sweetness. I prefer to use chocolate habaneros in uncooked dishes, to show off the peppers' handsome color. (*C. chinense*.)



#### COBÁN

As small as a chiltepín, this hot Guatemalan pepper is often called chile cobanero and is used both fresh and smoke-dried. The cobán takes its name from a town in Guatemala's Alta Verapaz region, where it flavors a beloved turkey stew called kak'ik. (*C. annum*.)





**AJÍ LIMON**

*This elegantly contoured Andean cultivar reaches a length of about two and a half inches and has a charming, citrusy flavor and a pleasant yet potent heat comparable to that of the northern Peruvian ají limo. Sometimes called the Peruvian yellow pepper, it ripens from green to a lustrous lemon yellow. (C. baccatum.)*



**AJÍ SANTA CRUZ**

*The bright color and pungent fruitiness of this three-inch-long Bolivian pepper make it an ideal replacement for the orange-hued (and sometimes harder to find) ají escabeche, typically used in northern Peruvian cooking. It grows on a tall plant that needs plenty of space and sunlight. (C. baccatum.)*



**ARIBIBI GUSANO**

*To me, this fascinating Bolivian pepper resembles a caterpillar. The roughly one-and-a-half-inch-long pod is deeply aromatic and, like many members of the C. chinense species, deliciously hot. The aribibi gusano gives an intense aroma to fresh salsas, making for an unusual garnish. (C. chinense.)*



**BELIZE SWEET HABANERO**

*Seeds from this small, winsome red pepper came from the town of Punta Gorda in Belize. It resembles the much hotter scotch bonnet pepper more closely than the smoother-skinned habaneros of the neighboring Yucatán. Like the ají dulce, its chinense cousin, it is very aromatic and only moderately hot. (C. chinense.)*



**CAYENNE**

*From its South American home, the bitingly hot cayenne traveled across the world with Portuguese explorers. It is now widely cultivated in North America. The seasoning powder sold commercially as cayenne pepper is no longer made exclusively with cayennes but, usually, with a blend of other hot cultivars. (C. annuum.)*



**CAYENNE (GOLD)**

*This five-inch-long, smooth-skinned, yellow cayenne was developed in the U.S. It is a cousin of the more widely known, red-colored long cayenne (left) and, with its clean, direct piquancy, works well in Peruvian ceviches (raw fish dishes) when you can't find the more traditional ají limo or ají amarillo. (C. annuum.)*



**CHAPEAU DE FRAIDE**

*Shaped like a bishop's crown, with a pronounced lobed and concave tip, this very hot pepper is called pimenta cambuci in its native Brazil. It is almost too beautiful to eat, but its fruity flavor is as alluring as its curious silhouette. I like to use it raw in seafood cocktails and savory fruit salsas. (C. baccatum.)*



**CHILE DE AGUA**

*This six-inch-long Mexican pepper has a shape reminiscent of the much milder poblano's. Oaxacan cooks often stuff it with a savory pork hash. They also cut it into strips, sauté it with onions and epazote, finish the mixture with milk and fresh cheese, and serve it with warm tortillas. (C. annuum.)*



**CUBANELLE**

*This is the fresh sweet pepper of choice in Hispanic Caribbean cooking. Cubanelles take on a red color when fully mature but are normally sold when they are pale green. This five-inch-long pepper is ideal for frying; that explains why it's sometimes called Italian frying pepper. (C. annuum.)*



**EARBOB**

*This earring-shaped South American pepper has an intense heat more widely associated with some cultivars of the C. chinense species. Crush a couple of pods lightly with some salt and add them to chicken soup for a dose of fruity heat. (C. baccatum.)*



**ECUADORAN AJÍ**

*On an Ecuadoran table there's almost always a tangy fresh condiment made with red onions and this pungent red pepper. Maturing to a length of four inches or so, the Ecuadoran ají ripens from a deep green to an arresting bright red. (C. baccatum.)*



**GRENADE SEASONING**

*This medium-size pepper from the island of Grenada, in the Lesser Antilles, has an intense tropical-fruit aroma but is milder than many other Caribbean peppers; it is similar in flavor to the ají dulce. It is an excellent choice for cooked sauces and bean dishes. (C. chinense.)*





#### INCA RED DROP

*I grew a bumper crop of these gorgeous, medium-hot, fleshy peppers in my New Jersey backyard. Shaped like a water droplet when fully ripe, this Peruvian chile is deliciously fruity, as are most *C. baccatum* peppers, and tastes terrific raw in salads, ceviches, and fresh salsas. (*C. baccatum*.)*



#### JALAPEÑO

*Mexicans love the fleshy jalapeño as a vegetable. They marinate it in vinegary escabeches (pickling sauces) or cut it into strips (rajas) to give moderate heat to a variety of foods, including the filling for tamales. When the jalapeño is dried and smoked it becomes the complexly flavored chipotle. (*C. annuum*.)*



#### LANTERN

*Shaped like a child's toy top, this pretty Peruvian pepper ripens from green to bright orange. The plant is a prolific bearer, and the peppers, which are very hot and have an herbal aroma and bright tropical-fruit flavors, are delicious in fresh salsas and sweet chutneys. (*C. chinense*.)*



#### MALAGUETA

*You'll find mountains of inch-long malaguetas at all stages of ripeness in Brazilian markets. Cooks in Brazil, where this very hot pepper is called pimenta malagueta, crush them by the dozen and add them to their molhos (table sauces); they also pickle them in vinegar and use them as a condiment. (*C. frutescens*.)*



#### PASILLA/CHILACA

*The six- to 12-inch pasilla, which ripens from a deep olive green to a dark, purple-tinged mahogany, is known as chilaca when fresh (pictured). Pasilla ("little raisin") is the name it acquires when dried. Roasted chilaca can be crushed with garlic, oregano, and salt for a table salsa. (*C. annuum*.)*



#### PERUVIAN HABANERO

*This strikingly beautiful, squash-shaped pepper ripens to a bright yellow-orange color. Like most habaneros, it balances an intense and bracing heat with a surprisingly delicate floral aroma. The Peruvian habanero goes well in fresh salsas, onion relishes, and citrus-spiked ceviches. (*C. chinense*.)*



#### PERUVIAN POINTER

*This comely, diminutive, medium-hot Peruvian pepper has smooth skin and thick flesh and grows to a length of about one and a half inches. It is an ornamental, but, as I've discovered with other showy varieties, it's a fine cooking pepper. I use it in northern Peruvian-style ceviches instead of the more customary ají limo. (*C. baccatum*.)*



#### PIMENTA-DE-CHEIRO

*The name pimenta-de-cheiro ("fragrant pepper") describes a number of lantern-shaped and very aromatic Brazilian chinense peppers that are usually pickled in vinegar and added to table sauces. I grew the tiny, roundish cultivar pictured above; it ripened to orangey red. (*C. chinense*.)*



#### RED ROCOTO

*The chubby, black-seeded, intensely piquant rocoto is the emblematic pepper of the *C. pubescens* species. Bolivian and Peruvian cooks use them in ceviches and purée them with tree tomatoes (tamarillos) to make a delicious dipping sauce for fried seafood. (*C. pubescens*.)*



#### RED SCOTCH BONNET

*Like its relative the habanero, this small, very hot Caribbean pepper—which takes its name from its bulbous, bonnet-like shape—has tropical-fruit flavors and musky herbaceous notes that add brightness and depth to fresh salsas. (*C. chinense*.)*



#### ROCOTILLO

*This tiny, bumpy-skinned Caribbean pepper is just as aromatic as the sweeter ají dulce, also popular in the Hispanic Caribbean, but has only a mild piquancy. It can enhance all sorts of dishes, from black bean soup to aromatic cilantro-based salsas. (*C. chinense*.)*



#### SANTA FE GRANDE

*This subtly pungent pepper, of a variety known as wax pod type, was developed at the University of California at Davis in 1966. The five-inch santa fe grande can be used in much the same way as a jalapeño, pickled or added to cooked sauces and fresh salsas. (*C. annuum*.)*





#### MARABA

Probably named after a municipality in Brazil's Amazon region, this small, hot pepper is easily distinguished by its blunt tip and the attractive purple shading on its golden surface. I use it raw whenever I want to add a combination of exciting color, potent heat, and deep herbal aromas to my food. (*C. chinense*.)



#### MIRASOL (PURPLE VARIETY)

Not to be confused with the Andean *aji mirasol*, the Mexican *mirasol* is a moderately hot, three-inch-long chile that normally ripens to a bright red; a purple cultivar is shown here. Better known dried, in which case it is called *guajillo*, it adds sharpness and a bright color to cooked sauces. (*C. annuum*.)



#### NUMEX BIG JIM

This stunning, foot-long pepper is one of many descendants of the New Mexico pod-type cultivars developed by the horticulturist Fabián García in the early 20th century. Easy to peel and mildly hot, it is ideal for stuffing or fire-roasting; it's also delicious roasted, cut into strips, and sprinkled with olive oil. (*C. annuum*.)



#### NUMEX SANDÍA

Crossbred from a Californian *anaheim* chile and a New Mexican pod-type pepper called the NuMex 9, the *sandía* is easier to peel than the *anaheim* and much hotter than either of its parents. But, as with many New Mexican varieties, its heat does not linger and is balanced by a fine, apple-peel flavor. (*C. annuum*.)



#### PIMIENTO DE PADRÓN

Though these tiny, thin-skinned peppers hail from Spain, they were likely developed from Mexican seeds. Very tasty when fried in olive oil and sprinkled with coarse salt (see page 32 for a recipe), these peppers are generally mild, but it is not uncommon to find a few in a bunch that are hot enough to make you gasp. (*C. annuum*.)



#### POBLANO

In Mexico, the large, moderately hot poblano is the quintessential pepper for stuffing. Some cultivars mature from a deep green to mahogany; others ripen to a chocolate brown. When dried, the greener peppers become wrinkled and dark brown *ancho* chiles, which are essential to cooked sauces and moles. (*C. annuum*.)



#### QUINTISHO

This roughly half-inch-long, aromatic-tasting Bolivian hot pepper ripens from green to gold and can be used in a number of dishes requiring extra heat. It is sometimes listed as a *C. baccatum*, other times as a *C. annuum*, but its greenish white and purple flowers are consistent with *C. chinense* cultivars. (*C. baccatum*.)



#### RED HABANERO

A few slivers of this flavorful and versatile little pepper add a splash of spectacular color and a deep herbal flavor—as well as ample heat—to fresh salsas. For a milder experience and the same, wonderful flavor, try the *Suave habanero*, developed by the Chile Pepper Institute in Las Cruces, New Mexico. (*C. chinense*.)



#### SERRANO

Widely available in the U.S., the Mexican *serrano* is a small, pungent chile with a clean, sharp flavor. Mexicans favor it over *jalapeños* when making fresh salsas or *guacamole*. It is also delicious pickled (see page 32 for a recipe). (*C. annuum*.)



#### STARFISH

This whimsically shaped Brazilian pepper is very hot and has a crisp, thin flesh. The pod type is similar to that of the Brazilian *chapeau de frade* (see page 29). I use starfish peppers as a garnish; they also add fruitiness and heat to fresh salsas and vinaigrettes. (*C. baccatum*.)



#### TABASCO

The *tabasco* pepper is the best-known domesticated variety of the *C. frutescens* species. It's not known when *tabasco* peppers first migrated north from Central America, but they are now inextricably associated with the Louisiana-made sauce of the same name. (*C. frutescens*.)



#### TRINIDAD PERFUME

This is the Trinidadian counterpart to the popular and much smaller *aji dulce*. A super cooking pepper, it has all the complex flavors of a hot *chinense* like the *habanero* but delivers mild heat and thus requires less restraint on the part of the cook. (*C. chinense*.)



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ENGLISH PUB BURGER



Aged Cheddar Waffle Fries



COBB BURGER



Classic Ranch Waffle Fries



SANTA FE CHORIZO BURGER



Hot Pepper Waffle Fries



BEET BURGER



Savory Seasoned Onion Strips



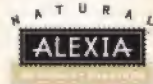


## COBB BURGER

SERVES 2

- 1 lb. ground turkey, formed into 2 patties
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 oz. crumbled blue cheese
- 2 ciabatta or other crusty hamburger buns
- 2 tbsp. mayonnaise
- 4 strips bacon, cooked until crisp
- Leaf lettuce
- 1 medium beefsteak tomato, sliced crosswise
- 1/2 avocado, pitted and sliced
- 1 hard-boiled egg, sliced lengthwise

PAIRS WITH



CLASSIC RANCH  
WAFFLE FRIES



### METHOD

Season patties with salt and pepper. Grill or panfry patties until browned and cooked through, about 15 minutes. Top burgers with cheese during the last minute of cooking. Spread mayonnaise on the bottom of the burger buns, top buns with lettuce and tomato, burgers, and bacon. Serve burgers with avocado and egg.

## ENGLISH PUB BURGER

SERVES 2

- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, sliced crosswise into 1/4" rings
- 1 12-oz. bottle of stout beer
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 lb. ground beef chuck, formed into 2 patties
- 2 slices of aged white cheddar cheese
- 2 sesame hamburger buns
- Dijon mustard

PAIRS WITH



AGED CHEDDAR  
WAFFLE FRIES



### METHOD

Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over high heat. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 8 minutes. Add beer and cook until onions are tender and beer has reduced until almost evaporated, about 20 minutes. Season onions with salt and pepper and set aside. Season patties and grill or panfry to desired temperature, about 10 minutes for medium rare. Top burgers with cheese during last minute of cooking. To assemble, top burger with braised onions and serve on buns slathered with dijon.

## BEET BURGER

SERVES 2

- 2 tbsp. finely grated raw beets
- 1/2 cup raw rolled oats
- 1/4 cup cooked and cooled rolled oats
- 1/4 cup peanuts, coarsely ground
- 1/4 cup walnuts, coarsely ground
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped onion
- 1 tbsp. sesame seeds
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped fresh basil
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped parsley
- 2 tsp. finely chopped mint
- 3 tbsp. soy sauce
- 2 tsp. dry mustard
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 2 hamburger buns
- Baby arugula, for garnish
- 1/2 lemon

PAIRS WITH



SAVORY SEASONED  
ONION STRIPS



### METHOD

In a large bowl, combine first 13 ingredients. Transfer mixture to the refrigerator and let chill for 1 hour. Using wet hands, form mixture into patties. Transfer patties to a wax paper-lined baking sheet and refrigerate for 30 more minutes to let firm. Heat oil in 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, cook patties until golden brown and cooked through, about 10 minutes. Transfer beet burgers to buns and garnish with arugula dressed with lemon juice.

## SANTE FE CHORIZO BURGER

SERVES 2

- 1 lb. ground pork
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne
- 1/2 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. oregano
- 2 slices pepper jack cheese
- 2 potato hamburger buns
- 1 scallion, thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 jarred roasted red pepper, sliced lengthwise
- Pickled jalapeños, for garnish
- Picked cilantro leaves, for garnish
- Sour cream or "crema", for garnish

PAIRS WITH



HOT PEPPER  
WAFFLE FRIES



### METHOD

In a large bowl, combine pork, salt, pepper, chile flakes, cayenne, paprika, and oregano. Form pork mixture into 2 patties. Grill or panfry patties until browned and cooked through, about 12 minutes. Top with cheese in the last minute of cooking. Transfer burgers to the bottom buns and top with scallions, peppers, jalapeños, and cilantro. Serve with sour cream.



## INGREDIENT



### PIMIENTOS DE PADRÓN CON JAMÓN SERRANO

(Padrón Peppers with Serrano Ham)

SERVES 4

The thumb-size pimiento de padrón pepper is a specialty of Galicia, Spain. In author Maricel Presilla's interpretation of a classic Spanish preparation, the peppers are stir-fried with garlic and serrano ham to give the peppers an extra-savory flavor.

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 40 pimientos de padrón or shishito or Basque fryer
- 2 oz. thinly sliced serrano ham or prosciutto, torn into 2" pieces (about 1/2 cup)
- 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- Sea salt, to taste
- 4 lemon wedges

Heat a 12" cast-iron skillet over high heat. Add oil and heat until it ripples and smokes lightly. Add peppers and ham and cook, flipping peppers occasionally with a spoon, until peppers have blistered and softened, about 2 minutes. Add garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 1 more minute. Transfer peppers to a platter, sprinkle generously with sea salt, and serve with lemon wedges.



### SERRANOS EN ESCABECHE

(Pickled Serrano Chiles)

MAKES 24 PICKLES

The pickling of hot peppers is a common practice across Latin America. These pickled serranos make a versatile condiment that adds tartness and heat to everything from tacos to scrambled eggs. For the tastiest results, allow the pickled peppers to sit in the refrigerator for at least a week before you use them.

- 2 cups extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large white onions, halved lengthwise and cut crosswise into 1/4" slices
- 2 tsp. toasted cumin seeds
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 24 serrano or jalapeño chiles
- 12 whole allspice
- 12 whole black peppercorns
- 4 dried bay leaves
- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- Kosher salt, to taste

Heat the oil in a 12" skillet over high heat. Add the onions and cook until just soft, about 2 minutes. Add the cumin, oregano, peppers, allspice, peppercorns, and bay leaves; cook, stirring occasionally, until the peppers soften slightly, about 5 minutes. Add the vinegar and salt; bring to a simmer. Transfer the pepper mixture to a 1 1/2-qt. sterilized glass jar and allow to cool to room temperature; cover and refrigerate for 1 week before serving.



### SHRIMP CEVICHE

SERVES 6

For this ceviche, author Presilla combines mild and slightly sweet ají dulce peppers with the vibrantly hot habanero to create an intensely flavored dish. Presilla makes a quick broth with the shrimp shells and poaches the shrimp in it briefly to give the ceviche a deeper, more savory flavor.

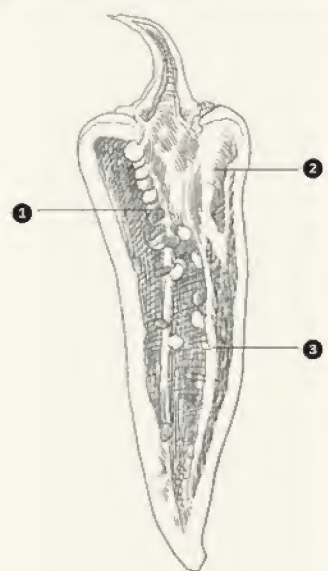
If you can't find sour oranges, you can use a mixture of 1/2 cup freshly squeezed orange juice and 1/2 cup freshly squeezed lime juice instead.

- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 tsp. achiote seeds (optional)
- 4 sour oranges
- 30-35 medium shrimp (about 1 lb.), peeled and deveined, shells reserved
- 1 tbsp. whole allspice
- 6 sprigs cilantro, plus 2 tbsp. finely chopped
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 14 small ají dulce or orange or red habanero peppers, stemmed, seeded, and thinly sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1/2 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 red habanero pepper, stemmed, seeded, and halved

1 Heat the oil and achiote seeds in an 8" skillet over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until the oil is red and fragrant, 4-5 minutes. Strain the oil through a sieve and set aside; discard the achiote seeds. (If you're not using achiote seeds, simply omit the preceding step and use the olive oil on its own as instructed below.) Zest half of 1 orange; set zest aside. Juice the oranges to make 3/4 cup juice; set juice aside.

2 Bring the shrimp shells, allspice, cilantro sprigs, reserved orange zest, salt, and 4 cups water to a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer the broth mixture for 10 minutes. Strain the shrimp broth through a fine sieve set over a medium bowl; discard solids. Add the shrimp to the bowl containing the strained broth and poach until shrimp are just pink and cooked through, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the shrimp to a plate. Set aside 1/4 cup of the broth; freeze the remaining broth for another use. Slice the shrimp in half lengthwise

### HANDLING & STORAGE



The principal heat-giving compound in peppers, capsaicin, is not concentrated in the fruit's seeds 1, as often thought, but rather in the pithy, seed-studded flesh, or placenta 2, which is located near the stem and extends along the inner ribs 3. Many cooks wear rubber gloves when handling very hot peppers; others halve the pepper lengthwise and scrape away the soft flesh and seeds with a small spoon (which, not incidentally, will dramatically reduce the pepper's pungency). Whatever your method, take care when handling the pepper's hottest parts: keep from touching your face, and wash your hands when you've finished. When shopping, choose peppers with the greenest stems (brown patches indicate that the pepper is less than fresh). Most fresh peppers can be left out for a couple of days, though some—especially those sold unripe, like green bells, or thin-skinned varieties like the habanero—will lose moisture more quickly and should be refrigerated after a day. When refrigerating, store the peppers in a tightly sealed plastic bag on the top shelf of the fridge (peppers store the best at between 45°F and 55°F). You can also freeze almost any kind of pepper for as long as a year; just seal them snugly in plastic bags. Frozen peppers will retain their flavor and heat, though their crunchy texture will be lost—not a problem in the case of chiles destined for cooked dishes and salsas. —Kristen Miglore



## INGREDIENT

and transfer to a medium bowl. Add the reserved achiote oil and broth, orange juice, chopped cilantro, lime juice, ají dulce peppers, garlic, red onions, and habanero pepper; stir to combine and cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate to let the flavors meld for 1 hour before serving.

**SECO DE POLLO***(Peruvian Chicken Stew)*

SERVES 4-6

The brightly colored and intensely fruity Andean pepper known as ají amarillo gives this traditional stew a bold but nuanced character, enhanced

by the addition of pisco, a Peruvian grape brandy similar to white rum, and by allowing the chicken to marinate overnight before it's cooked.

- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 2 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 10 fresh or thawed frozen ají amarillo or fresno peppers (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb.), stemmed, seeded, and roughly chopped (see page 108)
- 16 whole cloves garlic, plus 4 cloves finely chopped
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 4-lb. chicken, cut into 10 pieces
- 1 medium red onion, finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup finely chopped cilantro
- 4 plum tomatoes, chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup pisco or white rum
- 2 medium new potatoes

(about 1 lb.), peeled and quartered

- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups chicken broth
- 2 cups steamed long-grain white rice, for serving

① In a blender, purée 1 tbsp. of the oil along with the vinegar, turmeric, cumin, peppers, whole garlic, and salt to make a thick paste. Place the chicken in a large baking dish and spread the paste all over the chicken with a rubber spatula; cover tightly with plastic wrap and marinate the chicken in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours or as long as overnight.

② Transfer the marinade to a bowl, using a butter knife to scrape any excess marinade from chicken; set the marinade aside. Heat the remaining oil in an 8-qt. heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add the chicken, skin side down, and cook, flipping once, until

browned all over, about 10 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a plate; set aside. Add the remaining garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until lightly browned, about 20 seconds. Reduce heat to medium, add the onions, and cook, scraping any browned bits from the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon, until lightly browned, about 8 minutes. Add the reserved marinade, cilantro, and tomatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, until tomatoes have softened, about 5 minutes. Remove pot from the heat and add the pisco. Return pot to heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid has mostly evaporated, about 2 minutes. Nestle the chicken into the pot along with the potatoes and pour in the chicken broth; season with salt. Reduce heat to medium and cook, tightly covered, until the potatoes are fork tender and the chicken is cooked through, about 35 minutes. Serve the chicken stew over the steamed rice.

## This Month at SAVEUR.COM

This month at SAVEUR.COM you'll find more of our favorite hamburger destinations and the opportunity to share your own top burger picks; a recipe for a huckleberry buckle and other seasonal crisps and cobblers; tasting notes on select New Zealand wines; a conversation with a championship hot chile pepper eater; and many other exclusive online features.

Discover delicious dishes in the SAVEUR recipe files.







BN\_007513\_SA00709

He spent decades researching the right wood  
for his wine barrels.

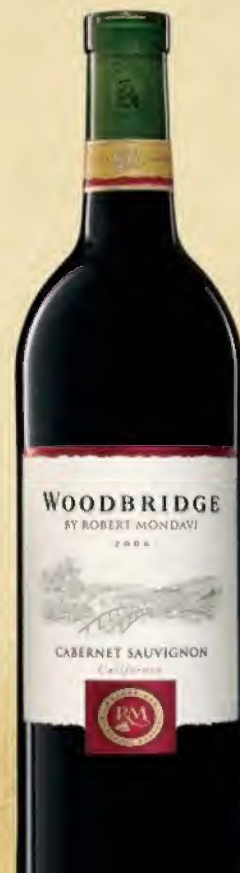
You can taste the results in just a sip.

Robert Mondavi believed that finesse and care were equal  
ingredients to the grapes themselves. At the time, people  
thought him a bit obsessive. Which is the very same reason  
people drink Woodbridge by Robert Mondavi today.

*His name is on the bottle. His story is in it.*

WOODBIDGE

*by Robert Mondavi*





# REPORTER

## Huckleberry Heaven

Come August, natives of the Northwest have just one fruit on their minds

BY CHRISTOPHER HALL

**W**HEN I WAS GROWING UP, my grandparents used to pick huckleberries by the pailful in the woods near Mount Rainier in Washington. So did pretty much everyone they knew. Given its privileged place in the popular imagination—think Huckleberry Finn, Huckleberry Hound, “Moon River”’s huckleberry friend—this wild-growing cousin of the blueberry might as well have been the national fruit, as far as they were concerned. But if you’re like me and don’t live in the Northwest, the berry’s native turf, huckleberries don’t pop up on your radar nearly often enough.

So, last August, at the height of huck-picking season, I traveled to the Northwest, fueled by visions of those juicy berries my grandparents picked. Having tasted huckleberries mostly in crisps and pies, I started out by visiting some bakers, like Mary Lou Hanks, who, until she passed away last year, ran the baking contest at the annual Huckleberry Heritage Festival in Wallace, Idaho. Her pie, bubbling and fresh from the oven, was as dark as the night sky, and the berries had a musky, sweet flavor and an edge-of-the-tongue tanginess that wouldn’t quit. Hanks picked her first huckleberry during the Great Depression, she said: “My mother gave me a cup to fill, but those hucks were so sweet I couldn’t help eating them right off the bush.”


There are more than a dozen species of berries that go by the name huckleberry in North America, but the kind you’ll find at farm stands, fairs, and restaurants in the Northwest are usually the deep purple mountain huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*), which has a fragrant, jammy flavor somewhere between a blueberry’s and a blackberry’s. Around this time of year, small armies of pickers light out for the mountains in search of the forest clearings where the berries grow; they sell their harvest at local farmers’

markets or to grocery stores, restaurants, or produce distributors. All attempts to cultivate the berries have failed, so competition for the limited, erratic supply is fierce.

A few days into my visit, I headed east into Montana’s Cabinet Mountains. In the town of Trout Creek, the owners of a restaurant called the Huckleberry Thicket introduced me to a picker named Jeanine Bosker, who agreed to let me tag along with her for a day, provided I kept the whereabouts of her berry patch secret. The next morning, we drove in Bosker’s dust-covered pickup past dense stands of cedar and fir into the mountains. Even before we started picking, the cab smelled like huckleberries. “The aroma gets into everything, even your clothes,” said Bosker, an energetic 46-year-old who wore a Tom Petty T-shirt.

When we arrived at the patch, we unloaded plastic buckets and handheld pickers, which were nothing more than coffee cans outfitted with a handle and a protruding metal comb. For the rest of the morning, we struggled up steep slopes covered with chest-high huckleberry bushes, sweeping our pickers gently through the foliage to remove the berries. It was hard work. Bosker told me that she does this six days a week during the season. “You pick so much you get ‘huckleberry fever,’” she said. “When you shut your eyes at night you still see them.”

I know what she means. Over the course of my trip, I encountered everything from huckleberry wine to huckleberry syrup, as well as venison, lamb, and pork served with huckleberry sauces. My favorite huckleberry moment, however, occurred at the North Idaho Fair & Rodeo in Coeur d’Alene. In 101-degree heat, I waited in line with about two dozen other fairgoers in front of a lavender-colored booth. A menu board advertised a number of huckleberry treats, including a giant sugar cookie topped with cream cheese and huckleberries, but most people were ordering just one thing: the

huckleberry milk shake. I did the same. The berry-studded shake was so dense that I quickly gave up on a straw and went at it with a spoon. I stood outside the booth for a good while, eating one creamy bite after another. The sun was blazing, but at that moment I felt nothing but pure, sweet comfort. 

### HUCKLEBERRY CRISPS

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

This dessert (facing page) can be made with either fresh or frozen huckleberries or blueberries.

- 6 tbsp. plus ½ cup sugar
- 6 tbsp. flour
- ¼ cup rolled oats
- ¼ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts
- 1 tsp. lemon zest plus 2 tsp. lemon juice
- ¾ tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 4 cups huckleberries or blueberries (see page 108)
- 2 tbsp. cornstarch
- 2 tsp. brandy
- Crème fraîche or vanilla ice cream, for serving

Heat oven to 350°. Place four 6-oz. fluted ceramic ramekins on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. In a medium bowl, combine 6 tbsp. sugar, flour, oats, brown sugar, walnuts, lemon zest, ¼ tsp. vanilla, ¼ tsp. salt, and cinnamon. Using your fingers, work the butter into the flour mixture until crumbly; transfer topping to freezer to let chill for 30 minutes. In a large bowl, stir together the remaining sugar and salt, lemon juice, and remaining vanilla, along with the huckleberries, cornstarch, and brandy; divide berry mixture between the ramekins. Mound some of the topping over each ramekin. Bake until the berries are bubbly and the topping is browned, 35–40 minutes. Top each crisp with a dollop of crème fraîche.

CHRISTOPHER HALL’s most recent article for *SAVEUR* was “Praise Pork” (November 2008).







## KITCHENWISE



Author John Currence and his wife, Bess Currence, prepare a meal in their kitchen in Oxford, Mississippi. The "Coffee" sign overhead, purchased in a local junk shop, was a gift from Bess to John.





# Where the Hearth Is

A renovation prompts a seasoned chef to rethink what a kitchen is for

BY JOHN CURRENCE PHOTOGRAPHS BY MEG MCKINNEY

**O**VER THE PAST 17 YEARS, as a chef and owner of eight restaurants in Oxford, Mississippi—all of them in old buildings—I have overseen the design and construction of plenty of kitchens. So, launching into the renovation of my own home kitchen promised to be no big deal. Or so I thought.

I purchased my house, a “magnificent fixer-upper” on a secluded lot ten miles outside of

Oxford, in 1992. Three thousand square feet of hand-hewn log rooms and rustic add-ons, it was just the sort of stylistic hodgepodge that fit the young, renegade-chef persona I was cultivating at the age of 26. The house’s only real shortcoming was its tiny, outdated kitchen. The 200-square-foot space had “custom” cabinets with drawers that wouldn’t budge, a ’60s-era electric oven with a door that fell off every

time it was opened, and a moody faucet that sputtered and spit water of unpredictable temperatures. If you recall the kitchen from the television show *Green Acres*, you get the drift.

I got married two summers ago, and almost as soon as my wife, Bess, moved in we discovered a mutual love for entertaining. I had been single for years and had never done much of it, and Bess had come from a tiny



## KITCHENWISE

Manhattan apartment. We had a wonderful circle of friends, so the door swung wide for dinner parties. Soon enough, it became clear that the cramped kitchen had to go. That would mean doing some demolition to remove a previous addition and building a 1,200-square-foot space dedicated almost exclusively to the kitchen.

We received the architectural plans exactly three days after we returned from our honeymoon. The space for the kitchen, intentionally left blank by our architect, was to be my design domain. I was drunk with excitement. Each morning, over coffee, I would roll out the plans on our kitchen table and try to conjure the layout in my head. To my surprise (and increasing alarm), no picture emerged. I cut rectangles out of construction paper that represented cabinets, stoves, tables, and appliances. Still nothing. To make matters worse, it seemed that every time I turned around, someone was insisting that I must be the happiest man in the world: a chef designing his own home kitchen! I tried to maintain a brave face for my new bride, but I knew she could smell the fear.

Finally, an image of a rural kitchen in a design magazine jogged loose the memory of an evening I'd spent at the house of some friends in the country outside Paris. Their kitchen had exposed beams, beautifully weathered tile, and copper pots with a patina accumulated over years of use. We'd cooked a huge meal, drunk too much armagnac, and sat in that kitchen for hours, all the while feeding a little counter-height fireplace with logs.

That's when it hit me. After designing so many professional cooking areas, where the object is to move people and food through space efficiently, I had a very different goal here. We'd already noticed



**1** A central goal of the renovation was to marry a comfortable sitting area and a kitchen in a single, continuous space. **2** One of a number of rosemary bushes that grow outside the kitchen's back door. **3** Shelves built from salvaged wood and antique shelf brackets hold a collection of Apilco soup terrines purchased on the couple's honeymoon in Burgundy. The shelves also help to temper the powerful afternoon sunlight that comes in through the west-facing bank of windows. **4** A brick built-in unit houses a 48-inch Viking range with six burners and a griddle. **5** A second-story gallery has room for the couple's cookbooks, pieces from their folk art collection, and Currence's home office.

JOHN CURRENCE is the chef-owner of the City Grocery Restaurant Group in Oxford, Mississippi.

that our guests tended to congregate in the kitchen despite its puny size. What our new kitchen needed was a focal point that would actually encourage and accommodate lingering. It needed a hearth.

We began trying to determine how we could include a fireplace like the one I'd coveted in France, only to learn that building codes and space constraints made that impossible. Before long, though, we hit on a perfect substitute: a wood-burning oven. It would provide both the ambience of a fireplace and the functionality of an appliance. We found one we liked, the EarthStone Model 90, a medium-size oven with ample room on its floor for cooking.

As the weeks passed, other pieces began falling into place. Next to our wood-fired oven we installed a brick built-in unit for a six-burner griddle-top Viking range. A large central island, lined by stools on one side, would house a hand-hammered copper farmhouse sink as well as a Viking dishwasher and a Beverage-Air bottle cooler. We put in a butcher block for slicing and chopping and a granite board for pastry, and we had cabinets made from wood salvaged from our demolition. Along one wall we added a low-ceilinged second-story gallery, accessed by an iron spiral staircase, for our cookbooks. The countertops came last, as they do in any kitchen—at the moment when you feel you've been hemorrhaging money for longer than you can stand. We settled on stained concrete, but the "stain" was just superthick red enamel paint. It began peeling instantly, and Bess hated the color, but we decided to live with it.

In the year and a half since the kitchen was finished, Bess and I have spent almost all our waking moments together in that part of the house. We still don't like those damn countertops, but as soon as we get a fire going in the oven, we hardly notice them. 🍴



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## LIVES

## Native Soul

Hisao Nakahigashi's cuisine grows from deep roots

BY HARRIS SALAT

**H**ISAO NAKAHIGASHI began his rounds at seven in the morning. Dressed in a brown suede jacket, jeans, and orange rubber boots, the chef guided his silver van along narrow, winding lanes in the northern outskirts of Kyoto, Japan's former imperial capital. Against a backdrop of low-slung mountains, we passed traditional Japanese houses, rows of prefab apartment buildings, and, as we moved north out of the city, one- and two-acre farm plots planted with rows of carrots, daikon, cabbage, leeks, mustard greens, turnips, burdock root, and other varieties of kyo-yasai—the traditional heirloom vegetables of Kyoto Prefecture.

Chef Nakahigashi, a trim 56-year-old who grew up in the nearby mountains and cooked at his parents' inn outside Kyoto, can be found almost every morning amid these small farms, procuring the foods for the evening menu at Shojiki Nakahigashi, his 28-seat restaurant in Kyoto. *Shojiki* means eating grass, and until I witnessed the chef's almost mystic relationship with the roots, wild herbs, and other plants that are the cornerstones of his cooking, the name didn't seem to fit an upscale restaurant with a worshipful following in Japan and a six-month waiting list for reservations.

We pulled up to the home of Tojikazu Kitamura, a bus driver who tends a half-acre family plot that has been handed down through the generations. Kitamura, a compact man in his 60s, came out of the house, handed the chef a bag of taro roots, and led us past a small stream to his farming plot. Suddenly, Nakahigashi broke away from us and rushed ankle-deep into the burbling stream. "You see these weeds?" he said, as he crouched over a clump of green and purple leaves sprouting along the embankment. "They're edible." He yanked out several

bunches and washed the mud off the roots: wild watercress, upland cress, and water dropwort, he explained. Moments later, Nakahigashi strode over to a grassy mound at the edge of the field, dropped to his knees, and, using a small hand-held scythe, cut away a knot of red leaves: wild sorrel. Then he probed the tangle of grasses further, searching for one-inch shoots of tsukushi, a bitter-tasting plant. On finding a shoot, the chef raised his eyebrows and smiled.

In addition to cultivated heirloom vegetables, Nakahigashi told me, he cooks with wild-growing plants whenever possible. He said that when he serves wild udo—a fragrant, asparagus-like plant—customers sometimes complain that it's too bitter; they're accustomed to the milder taste of the farm-raised variety. "But I want to let my customers know that wild udo is the true flavor; I want to be the messenger of the real taste of udo." Nakahigashi also insists on cooking his vegetables on the same day he buys them from the farmers, "so that they taste as they do when they're still alive".

Finally, Nakahigashi loaded the wild greens, along with burdock, flowering rape shoots, and softball-size Kyoto turnips, into the van, and we drove away. We visited five more farmers that morning; all of them greeted the chef like an old friend. "They are my family," Nakahigashi said, as we headed back into the city. It is a slow way to buy ingredients, but Nakahigashi believes that the vegetables these farmers grow in their tiny fields and forage on their land retain more of the foods' "original flavor".

THE DISHES THAT NAKAHIGASHI cooks reflect Kyoto's particular inland topography. Surrounded by mountains and valleys on the central Japanese island of Honshu, this ancient city and its environs were, until the relatively recent advent of rail and motor transport, largely cut off from the ocean and fresh seafood, which became the foundation of the

cuisine in many other parts of Japan. Because of that, most people here cooked with home-grown heirloom vegetables, tofu, river and lake fish, wild game, salted mackerel and other preserved fish hauled from the coast, and greens collected from the forests and valleys. These ingredients informed the sophisticated ceremonial cuisines that evolved in Kyoto's imperial courts, as well as the simpler preparations that prevailed in many Kyoto households.

When Hisao Nakahigashi opened his restaurant, 12 years ago, he did not want simply to create a faithful reproduction of Kyoto cuisine. He wanted to establish a space where he could experiment with the foods he grew up eating and cooking with. With the exception of some saltwater fish from the closest ports on the Sea of Japan, virtually all his food is raised within 15 miles of his restaurant. His techniques and presentation are at once playful and classically precise, as I was to find out firsthand at dinner that evening.

Shojiki Nakahigashi is located near the Ginkaku-ji temple, one of Kyoto's most famous sights, but the restaurant—devoid of an awning or marquee, its entrance hidden behind latticed screens—completely escapes the notice of the throngs of tourists who walk by it every day.

When I arrived, Nakahigashi's wife, Kimiko, dressed in a kimono, led me to a seat at a burnished, L-shaped counter facing a pristine open kitchen. The chef stood on the other side, preparing a broth; he smiled to greet me. The kitchen is sunk several feet below the floor level of the dining room, so that Nakahigashi and his five young cooks

**Facing page, clockwise from top left: taro root; kyoto red negi, a type of Japanese onion; a takinawase (traditional simmered dish) of wild boar, taro root dumpling, rape flower, daikon, burdock root, and carrot; chef Hisao Nakahigashi.**

HARRIS SALAT is the author of *Japanese Hot Pots*, to be published in October by Ten Speed Press.







## LIVES



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face seated patrons at eye level—a gesture of respect. Nakahigashi wore a crisp white chef's tunic over a white collared shirt and a neatly knotted green tie; on his head he sported a white peaked cap. In the center of the kitchen stood a traditional clay brazier, a rarity in modern Japan. Anchovies sizzled on a metal grill on one side; rice gurgled in two stoneware pots on the other.

There is no menu at Shojiki Nakahigashi, as the cooking depends fully on the season, on the outcome of the daily visits to farms and fields, and on the chef's whims. Nakahigashi delivered the first course on a wine-colored lacquered tray. In his warm, resonant voice, he described the food: red turnips pickled in rice vinegar, thinly sliced, and arranged to make them resemble a red camellia; a puréed wild lily bulb also shaped so that it looked like a flower; a sweet white tofu purée accompanied by the bitter-tasting wild tsukushi buds; a sardine

filet poached in soy sauce and sake; and bright orange trout eggs atop a mound of mochi rice wrapped in a pickled wild suguki leaf.

One elegant, intriguing dish followed another: buttery trout filets roasted between two paper-thin cedar sheets and served with carp scales that had been candied in sugar and soy sauce; mackerel narezushi, an ancient kind of sushi made by fermenting the fish and rice for nine months to produce a flavor as sharp as that of a washed-rind époisse; wild boar braised with sweet heirloom carrots, daikon, rape shoots, and earthy burdock root. There was salted and grilled moroko, a lake fish the size of a sardine, and also a delicate carp sashimi served with taro, dandelion flowers, and wild mustard leaves. From time to time, I would shift my gaze from the plate or the kitchen to observe my fellow diners. When Nakahigashi wasn't explaining a dish to them, they talked and laughed amiably.

After each patron had eaten the last of the dozen or so courses, the chef delivered a simple epilogue: plain white rice and grilled anchovies—the ingredients I'd seen cooking on the clay oven earlier. He crowned each bowl with a crunchy piece of the golden, caramelized rice from the bottom of the stoneware pot. After finishing his bowl, a silver-haired man at the end of the counter asked for more of the crunchy rice, and the chef obliged him; the other customers did the same. Thirteen dishes and two and a half hours after I arrived, I was ready for my finale, too. That dish, like all the others, came with an explanation from the chef, albeit a brief one. "This is the main course" is all Nakahigashi said to me as he handed me my bowl.

I lingered over green tea for a while after my dinner, reflecting on the things I'd just eaten. The question foremost in my mind was why a humble bowl of rice would be considered the centerpiece of a meal that had so many bold flourishes. When Nakahigashi bade me farewell at the door, I asked him.

"We never get tired of white rice," the chef said matter-of-factly. He told me that he considered the other dishes to be a journey. "Why do you enjoy traveling?" he asked rhetorically. "Because you have a home to come back to. When we eat white rice, we go back to the origins of Japanese cooking. It's like coming home." 🍴

THE PANTRY, page 108: Contact information for Hisao Nakahigashi's restaurant.

### DASHI

(Seaweed and Dried Fish Broth)

MAKES 4 CUPS

Dashi is an all-purpose savory stock that's used in Japan to flavor many kinds of foods. This soy-and-sugar-flavored version comes from chef Hisao Nakahigashi, who uses it for his wild boar taki-awase (pictured on page 43). The broth also lends a wonderful flavor to vegetables when used as a marinade (see "Marinating the Vegetables", below).

- 1½ oz. kombu (dried kelp; see page 108)
- 1¾ oz. katsuobushi (dried shaved bonito flakes; see page 108)
- ⅓ cup light soy sauce
- 2 tsp. sugar

Put kombu into a 4-qt. saucepan and cover with 6 cups cold water; let soak for 30 minutes. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat; skim off foam from surface. Remove from heat; remove and discard kombu. Add katsuobushi to pot; let steep until saturated, about 1 minute. Strain liquid through a sieve into a bowl set inside another bowl filled with ice water; discard katsuobushi. Stir broth until chilled. Whisk in soy sauce and sugar until dissolved. **Marinating the Vegetables:** Briefly boil or deep-fry 1 cup cauliflower florets, ½ cup trimmed sugar snaps, 3 small peeled plum tomatoes, 1 Japanese eggplant cut diagonally into 2-inch sections, and 6 small new potatoes, halved, until vegetables are crisp-tender. Marinate vegetables in broth for at least 30 minutes (or, refrigerated, for up to 3 days). Spoon a few tablespoons of the broth over the vegetables and serve.



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# CLASSIC

## Light Fantastic

The pavlova is one of New Zealand's sweetest pleasures

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE LIEBERMAN



**I**F NEW ZEALAND HAD A national dish, pavlova would no doubt be it. A puff of baked meringue topped, typically, with a generous dollop of whipped cream and a scattering of fruit, pavlova—or pav, as it's affectionately known among Kiwis—is such an institution in New Zealand that even the local McDonald's franchises tried to capitalize on its popularity in 2000, when they introduced the short-lived McPav. I can attest that while New Zealand is justly famous for its expressive wines, grass-fed

lamb, and abundant seafood, some of my most enduring memories of my travels there center on a whirring mixer filled with airy egg whites.

On a recent trip, I stayed in the Marlborough region, at the northeastern corner of New Zealand's South Island. It was only after I'd arrived that I learned that my host, Robyn Hedges, is one of the country's best-selling cookbook authors; her "Quick'n'Easy" series, published in the 1990s under her maiden name, Robyn Martin, has sold nearly 5 million copies. When I

asked about her pavlova recipe, she immediately started to dash around the kitchen, pulling out everything she'd need to make the dessert.

Robyn whisked the egg whites with sugar in a stand mixer for ten minutes. "This is one of the few things I use a timer for," she said. Meanwhile, she prepared a mixture of cornstarch (which prevents the meringue from shrinking during baking), white vinegar (which stabilizes the egg whites, increases their volume, and prevents them from weeping liquid once baked), and vanilla extract, which she added after soft peaks had formed, and then continued whisking until the mixture was thick and glossy. To ensure that her pavlova came out perfectly round, Robyn used a cake pan to trace a circle on a parchment-lined baking sheet. She then turned the meringue out onto the paper and used a rubber spatula to form an even mound crowned with graceful peaks. After it was baked, Robyn's pav was topped with lightly sweet whipped cream, fresh strawberries, sliced kiwifruit, and lashings of homemade lemon curd. The next day, I polished off three slices for breakfast.

THE STORY OF HOW PAVLOVA came to be a classic New Zealand dessert begins at the ballet. In 1926, the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova made her first visit Down Under, and her ethereal performances, for which she often donned a voluminous white tutu, inspired legions of devoted fans. Before long, recipes created in tribute to the ballerina began to appear. Some of these "pavlovas" didn't involve meringue at all. One early recipe called for layering sweetened gelatin of different colors in a pudding mold.

The first known recipe for meringue-based "pavlova cakes" appeared in the *Christchurch Weekly Press* on September 5, 1928. Submitted

*Contributing editor DAVE LIEBERMAN is the author of Dave's Dinners (Hyperion, 2006) and hosts Good Deal on the Food Network.*



## CLASSIC

by one Rose Rutherford, this early version doesn't have a whole lot in common with the large, white-as-snow pavlovas that New Zealanders favor today. The recipe yields not a single meringue but a number of small rounds flavored with coffee and walnuts. Tell a Kiwi to put coffee and walnuts into her pav today and she might have you tried for treason.


Though the Australians also declare the pavlova their own, New Zealanders adamantly defend their country's claim to being the dessert's rightful birthplace, and most historians agree. Still, what constitutes a "true" pavlova isn't entirely clear. When you look back over a century's worth of recipes, it seems just about everything under the sun has made its way into a pavlova at one point or another. Candied cherries, dried coconut...I've even seen a recipe for a giant pav made from an emu egg. The dessert's provenance may be established, but its potential for adaptation appears to be limitless.

ON MY LAST VISIT, friends in the Marlborough town of Blenheim told me that a local winegrower, Pip Hoar, made a pav I simply

couldn't leave New Zealand without trying. Pip and her husband, John, have been growing grapes in the Marlborough Valley for almost 30 years. When I arrived at their beautiful ranch home, set on one of their large plots of vines, Pip had already set out her pavlova ingredients. It all looked much the same as what I'd seen in Robyn Hedges's kitchen, but once Pip set to work, I realized that when it comes to making pavlova, the devil really is in the details.

Pip made a large pavlova using six egg whites. She, like everyone else I talked with, stressed the importance of letting the whites come to room temperature before using them so that they'd whip up to a greater volume. She whisked them for a while and then gradually added superfine sugar. If you add the sugar too quickly, she told me, the whites have a harder time aerating. (Because Robyn was using granulated sugar, which takes longer to dissolve, she'd added it early and all at once; hence the ten minutes of whisking to achieve the desired aeration.) Pip didn't combine her cornstarch and vinegar but rather spooned those ingredients separately and gradually into the egg whites as they were beaten.

When the meringue was whisked, Pip took the sheet of parchment lining the baking pan to the kitchen sink to drench it in water. "My mother taught me this trick," she said. "It keeps the pav from browning or sticking too much."

When the cake emerged from the oven, an hour later, it was tinged with the faintest hint of beige. Once it was cool, Pip whipped heavy cream into soft peaks and folded in some thick, tangy yogurt. She spread the mixture over the entire surface of the meringue and used nothing but ripe summer strawberries to adorn it. Whereas Robyn's pavlova had been a harmonic convergence of airy sweetness and bright citrus notes from the lemon curd, Pip's was a study in contrasts: the crisp surface of the meringue against the marshmallow-like interior; the sweetness of the sugar against the tartness of the cream and the berries. It dawned on me that the pavlova, composed of just a few simple ingredients, makes a perfect canvas for a cook's individual flair. If I were to continue my pavlova research indefinitely, there's no telling how many delicious variations I might come across. What a sweet life that would be. 

## How to Make a Pavlova



Few desserts are both as pretty and as easy to make as a pavlova. For this one, we've combined the best elements of Robyn Hedges's and Pip Hoar's versions. The key is patience: just allow the meringue to cool completely before transferring it to the plate or cake stand; that way, you'll prevent the crumbling that can occur when the process is rushed.

**1** Make lemon curd: In a small saucepan over medium heat, whisk together  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar, 1 egg, and the juice and zest of 1 lemon; cook, whisking constantly, until thickened, 8–10 minutes. Remove pan from heat and whisk in 2 tbsp. cubed, chilled unsalted butter, letting each cube incorporate before adding the next. Strain curd through a

fine sieve set over a small bowl; press plastic wrap against the surface of curd and refrigerate until well chilled.

**2** Make meringue: Heat oven to 350°. In a small bowl, stir together  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cornstarch, 1 tbsp. distilled white vinegar, and 1 tbsp. vanilla extract; set aside. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with

a whisk, beat 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups sugar and 8 room-temperature egg whites on low speed until combined. Increase speed to medium-high and beat until soft peaks form, about 14 minutes. Add cornstarch mixture to egg whites; continue beating until very stiff and glossy peaks form, about 5 more minutes.

**3** Place a 9" round

cake pan in the center of a 13" x 18" sheet of parchment paper and use a pencil to trace a circle around the outside of the pan. Flip the sheet of parchment paper and transfer it to a baking sheet so that the marked side is face down. Transfer meringue to the center of parchment paper.

**4** Using a rubber spatula, shape it into a 9" disk by making the meringue conform to the circular outline; smooth top and sides with rubber spatula.

Transfer meringue to the oven; reduce oven temperature to 215°; bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Turn off oven and let meringue sit until cooled, 3–4 hours. Gently peel parchment paper from the meringue and, using 2 metal spatulas, transfer meringue to a cake stand.

**5** In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk, beat 1 cup chilled heavy cream and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chilled plain yogurt on medium-high speed until stiff peaks form.

Pour the whipped cream mixture onto the cooled meringue and spread evenly over meringue's top using a rubber spatula.

**6** Decorate the top of the pavlova with halved strawberries and peeled, sliced kiwifruit. Remove the reserved lemon curd from the refrigerator and stir vigorously; drizzle the curd over the pavlova, reserving a few tablespoons for individual servings. Cut the pavlova into slices and serve immediately with lemon curd.



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## SOURCE

Creamy,  
Dreamy

Idaho's sublime summer treat

BY MICHAEL AMES

**T**HE PASTURES OF southeastern Idaho present an idyllic picture of America. The views are long and the roads uncrowded. It's a fitting place to reacquaint yourself with the simple summer joy of an ice cream cone, and I have found none better than at Reed's Dairy, a 54-year-old family-run establishment just outside the small, sleepy city of Idaho Falls.

The phrase *smooth and creamy*, thrown around so cavalierly by frozen-dessert purveyors these days, isn't sufficient to describe Alan Reed's ice creams, which are made from the milk of his 260 Holstein cows. They are almost supernaturally sumptuous and come in a range of delicious, if sometimes unorthodox, flavors. The list changes seasonally, but some perennial favorites are huckleberry (made from Idaho's state fruit); tangy black licorice; and German chocolate with coconut, almonds, and caramel. The strawberry is the best I've ever tasted.

Reed's father, LeRoy, started the dairy in 1955, and it quickly became known for its especially rich milk. In 1962 LeRoy opened a store on the farm; 20 years later Alan started to make ice cream, using his grandmother's recipe, in flavors proposed by family members and farmhands. The ice cream is made in a freezer similar to a home ice cream maker; it freezes the ingredients over the course of five hours, allowing the cream, milk, and sugar to achieve a velvety texture.

Reed attributes the richness of the ice cream to happy cows; his are raised without hormones or antibiotics and are milked twice a day in an open-air barn, in full view of the shop's customers. "It's the old saying," Reed says: "healthy cows, healthy milk". And really good ice cream. Reed's Dairy ships its ice cream anywhere in the country for \$6 to \$8 per pint (depending on the flavor). To order, call 208/522-0123 or visit [www.reedsicecream.com](http://www.reedsicecream.com).

**Clockwise from top left: strawberry, rocky road, mint cookie, bubble gum, Briana banana (banana, chocolate chips, marshmallow, and caramel), and black licorice.**



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# DISCOVER JAPAN'S HIDDEN TREASURES IN 2010

Two Important, Culturally-Rich, Outlying Destinations Not To Miss



GINZAN ONSEN

## KARATSU

A trading port since ancient times, Karatsu emerged four centuries ago as a primary center for Japanese pottery. Surrounding the Sea of Genkai on the southern island of Kyushu, the town's artisans are renowned for creating lyrical, sublime bowls for tea ceremonies; wares that intrinsically express the Japanese aesthetic known as *wabi sabi* (beauty that is imperfect, impermanent, humble). This tradition remains alive today in the various workshops of artists like Takashi Nakazato, an internationally celebrated 13th-generation craftsman and scion of Karatsu's preeminent pottery family.



Enjoy dining on some of the Genkai artisans' most distinguished tableware at local spots like Kawashima Tofu, a small, modest locale known for serving food to royalty in the 1790s. At the historic Yoyokaku, a traditional inn and Japanese garden, visitors may experience some of Mr. Naka-

zato's prize designs during a nine-course, seasonal *kaiseki* (traditional) dinner, featuring a bounty of fresh seafood from the rich fisheries of the Sea of Genkai. Yoyokaku also arranges visits to the potters' workshops, as well as outings to the tiny fishing port of Yobuko. Here, fisherman catch live, foot-long squid, which local eateries slice into the freshest possible sashimi.

## GINZAN ONSEN

Deep in the mountains of the rugged Yamagata prefecture in Japan's far northern region, a tiny hamlet sits along a rushing river enveloped by a towering cedar forest. Five hundred years ago miners established a base here to mine for silver. When veins of the precious metal ran out, residents soon discovered another prized commodity: restorative, sulfur-infused thermal waters. Ginzan quickly became renowned as a *tojiba*, or medicinal hot spring.

Today, visitors travel to Ginzan to recharge their bodies and spirits. A dozen stately *ryokan*, or traditional Japanese inns, surround a lively promenade on both sides of a river. These buildings, designed in the classic east-meets-west architectural style of the 1920s, offer tatami-floored rooms, private hot spring baths, and plenty of rustic fare, including mountain greens,

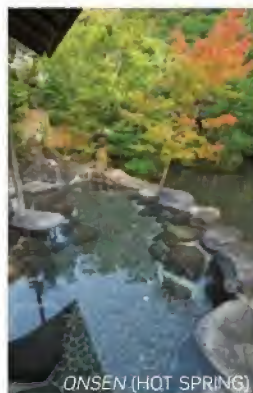
wild mushrooms, local beef and river fish, and special sake infused with roasted fish bones.



Hiking trails in Ginzan lead to the antiquated silver mines as well as the breathtaking Senshinkyo Gorge, home to a dramatic 70-foot waterfall. For a more luxurious touch, lodge at the Fujiya Inn, a 350-year-old establishment recently redesigned by Japanese celebrity architect Kengo Kuma. Re-opened in 2006, this *ryokan* offers just eight rooms and five hot spring baths, finished in beautiful natural blonde wood and hand-blown glass.



SQUID SASHIMI



ONSEN (HOT SPRING)

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# BURGER NATION

**T**IS OF THEE WE SING, JUICY HAMBURGER. With your flame-seared flavor and your crunchy, gooey, tangy-sweet toppings, you satisfy our body and soul. It doesn't matter where we are—in our backyard, at a linen-draped table, behind the wheel of a car—because our passion for you, the greatest of American culinary inventions, never dims. Our tastes, our attitudes, the very history of our country—it's all part of your story. That's why we've decided to celebrate you, the glorious hamburger, in all your wonderful incarnations. —*The Editors*



LONDON NORDEMAN

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## BURGERS

# THE PERFECT FOOD

A HAMBURGER WAKES UP THE APPETITE LIKE NOTHING ELSE

**C**ALVIN TRILLIN ONCE WROTE THAT anyone who doesn't think the best hamburger in the world is in his own hometown is a sissy. Well, I'm no sissy. Then again, I'm from LA, the Burger Capital of the Universe. When I was growing up there in the 1970s, we had places like In-N-Out, back when its outlets were few, and Fatburger—the original stand on Western Avenue,

which made the juiciest, messiest, most delicious burgers imaginable. We had the Apple Pan, the funky little place on Pico, still there and still great, where the patty is thin and the burger comes with a relish-y ketchup or hickory sauce and a crisp wad of lettuce. We had Bob's Big Boy and Hamburger Hamlet and Pie 'N Burger in Pasadena. McDonald's started in Southern California; so did the burger chains Carl's Jr. and Jack in the Box.

Which was my favorite? They all were. And are. When it comes to hamburgers, I'm like one of those men who love women, every kind of woman: plump ones, thin ones, plain ones, fancy ones. And I love every kind of burger: thick, juicy patties that come off backyard grills and go onto supermarket buns; the broiled sandwiches you eat from a red plastic basket at a burger joint; gourmet burgers, like the one made with ground dry-aged rib eye, skirt steak, short rib, and brisket at Minetta Tavern in New York City; or just the kind you make at home on a Wednesday night, griddled in a cast-iron pan and loaded up with whatever toppings feel right at the time—creamy blue cheese melted atop caramelized onions, say, or slices of avocado and bacon and juicy red tomatoes, or maybe just bread-and-butter pickles and american cheese.

You want one, don't you? I know, because unless you're a vegetarian,

the chances are good that you're mad for burgers too. We all are, even our commander in chief. The first time Barack Obama flew on Air Force One, what did he order for lunch? A steak and a caesar salad? A sushi platter? A turkey sandwich? No. A cheeseburger.

Whence all this passion? I've always thought it has to do with the fact that burgers are a sort of comfort food "plus." They're not like macaroni and cheese, which is wonderful in its way but kind of a one-note pleasure. A hamburger is a complex food, possessed of all kinds of flavors and textures and temperatures. It's the synergy of the thing: the bun, soft or firm, brushed with butter and grilled; the cool, crisp lettuce; and that seared, juicy ground beef. You take one bite, and it all comes together. It sings.

The inherent subtleties of this food never cease to intrigue home cooks and chefs. Recently, a former wine bar owner named Adam Fleischman opened a place called Umami Burger in my hometown. What, I asked him, does umami—the so-called fifth taste, whose name means savory or meaty in Japanese—have to do with *(continued on page 60)*

**Facing page, from left to right:** Top row, a barbecue in suburban Philadelphia, circa 1950; the Apple Pan in Los Angeles; Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's; McDonald's in Downey, California. Second row, a burger joint mascot; White Manna in Hackensack, New Jersey; Sid's Diner in El Reno, Oklahoma; actress Gail Patrick in 1938. Third row, a burger truck; a customer at Tommy's in Los Angeles; a billboard for a burger joint; the griddle at Ben's Chili Bowl in Washington, D.C. Fourth row, a cook at the Apple Pan in LA; a sign for Fatburger, an LA chain; the Rossini burger at Burger Bar in Las Vegas; late-night TV host Jimmy Kimmel. Bottom row, burgers from Shake Shack in New York City; the Hamburger Express in Great Neck, Long Island, circa 1951; chef Judy Rodgers at Zuni Café in San Francisco; Ben's Chili Bowl.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: H. ARMSTRONG ROBERTS/CLASSIC STOCK/CORBIS; TODD COLEMAN; AFP/GETTY IMAGES; ROBERT LANDAU/CORBIS; JOHN SPRINGER COLLECTION/CORBIS; JAMES OSELAND; MARIO ANZUONI/REUTERS/CORBIS; JAMES OSELAND; BARBARA RIES; BETTMANN/CORBIS; LONDON NORDMAN; TODD COLEMAN; BILL BROOKS/ALAMY; DAVID ZANZINGER/ALAMY; CAR CULTURE/CORBIS; PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; DOUGLAS FISHER/ALAMY; ANDRE BARANOWSKI; TODD COLEMAN (2)













In 1900 a Danish immigrant named Louis Lassen conceived a new way to serve hamburger steak, a cheap meal of chopped beef that was popular with local factory workers, at his luncheonette in New Haven, Connecticut. He sandwiched broiled ground beef between slices of toasted bread and served the dish fork-free. Lassen's descendants, who still run Louis' Lunch, will tell you that the hamburger was invented at that very moment. Some historians disagree, noting that Midwestern vendors had been selling hamburger sand-

## LUNCH COUNTER LEGEND

wiches before that. But why argue? The burgers at this restaurant are good, very good, and the fact that they're part of hamburger history makes them that much better.

Although the tiny establishment was moved in its entirety, wooden booths and all, to its current location near Yale's campus in 1975, it still looks pretty much the way it did when the place was last renovated, in 1929. Jeff Lassen, the fourth-generation owner, makes the patties from a secret combination of five different cuts of beef. They're formed by hand, topped with raw onion slices, and enclosed in a metal grate, which he slides into one of three cast-iron broilers forged in 1898. The burgers emerge nicely browned and rare in the center; they're slipped between two pieces of toasted Pepperidge Farm white bread along with a slice of tomato. You can request cheese, but that's it: no pickles, lettuce, or ketchup. Louis' Lunch leaves those bells and whistles to the new kids on the block. —Andrew F. Smith, author of *Hamburger: A Global History* (Reaktion Books, 2008)



## BURGERS

(continued from page 56) burgers? Fleischman said that he believes we are drawn to hamburgers because they have an innate umami character. He explained that umami foods—like beef, tomatoes, mushrooms, aged cheeses, and foods that are fermented or cured, such as miso and fish sauce—are rich in certain amino acids and ribonucleotides that both create and satisfy a deep craving. They make your mouth water and leave you with a rich, contented feeling inside. And because hamburgers tend to possess so many umami flavors bundled together—particularly in the case of the eponymous burger at Umami Burger, which features such toppings as oven-dried tomatoes and nutty-tasting parmesan crisps—they are objects of the most intense desire.

BURGERS HAVE BEEN AN AMERICAN obsession practically since beef first found its way onto a soft bun, though nailing down exactly when that happened is probably impossible. Historians like to point variously to the Tatars, that ancient Central Asian people who liked to eat minced raw beef, and the hamburg steak, a workingman's meal of chopped beef sold from lunch carts in the late 19th century. But who actually created the first hamburger sandwich? Who knows? It wasn't Charlie Nagreen in 1885 in Seymour, Wisconsin, though he is often credited with serving a meatball between two slices of bread. It wasn't Fletcher Davis, a Texan, who supposedly sold a ground-beef sandwich at the 1904 world's fair in St. Louis. And it wasn't a cook who served steak on toast at Louis' Lunch, the long-lived restaurant in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1890. These candidates for creator of burger zero actually made protoburgers, served on bread, not buns. The first documented instance of a hamburger on an actual bun can be traced to Walter Anderson, who started serving beef patties on bread made for the purpose at his White Castle restaurant in Wichita, Kansas, in 1921.

Things happened fast after that. By the 1920s, cheese had found its way into the equation, and lettuce and tomatoes soon followed. By the 1940s, the burger was sitting at the very center of American social life, both at the drive-ins and diners that were the heart of youth culture in virtually every town in the United States and at home, where backyard barbecues became the quintessential suburban weekend ritual. It's a rite we still observe with fervor, and it's distinct from other culinary traditions. The art of grilling a hamburger, unlike the act of baking a pie or roasting a chicken, isn't handed down from mother to daughter but rather from father to son. Mom may have formed the patties in the kitchen, but smoke, fire, and grill are Dad's domain.

Many home cooks took to tinkering with their ground beef, playing with different seasonings and sauces, and by the 1950s companies like Lipton's, Heinz, Lawry's, and Lea & Perrins were marketing all sorts of products, from dry soup mixes to Worcestershire sauce, as burger enhancers. The recipe booklets and cookbooks of the time were chock-full of ideas for making bigger burgers, more stylish burgers, burgers with exotic spices, and on and on. "In the Oriental sauce there are the undertones of a good chutney...it does an exotic something for hamburgers," wrote Clementine Paddleford, the influential food columnist, about a molasses-ginger sauce recipe in her *How America Eats* column in 1962. "There never was a sauce that could make a poor hamburger taste better."

That same inventive spirit drove grill cooks and burger joint operators, for whom the burger had become a potent symbol of good old American ingenuity and entrepreneurial independence. Multiple regional variations on the standard burger started to sprout up (see "Doing It Their Way," page 76), and burger stands raced to lay claim to new inventions: pizza burgers, chili burgers, and—with the proliferation of health food fads in the 1970s—tuna burgers, turkey burgers, and veggie burgers. Like hairstyles and hemlines, burgers became signs of the times.

We ate burgers at home. We ate burgers out. We ordered them in taverns, on the cafeteria line, at the coffee shop counter, from the roller rink snack bar—everywhere. The food's extraordinary adaptability made it an ideal bridge between casual dining and formal. By the 1970s, lots of fine restaurants—the '21' Club and The Colony in New York, Chasen's in LA—had put a burger on the menu, though it was there more to placate picky eaters than to enlighten discerning ones. It took a good long while for serious chefs to embrace the burger. The watershed moment may have come in 2001, when the French chef Daniel Boulud opened DB Bistro Moderne in New York City and introduced his \$29 DB Burger, which was stuffed with braised short ribs and foie gras.

So began the age of the glam burger. Chefs around the country started to reinvent the genre, building burgers that were richer, fatter, and sexier. Japanese Kobe beef, Périgord truffles, handmade brioche buns—the list of pricey ingredients grew and grew. Nowadays, it's not unusual for marquee-worthy chefs to run a burger-centric restaurant or even to go folksy with an old-school, if upscale, burger joint. Take Hubert Keller, long respected for his elegant San Francisco French restaurant Fleur de Lys: today he runs a chain of high-end casual restaurants called Burger Bar, in Las Vegas, St. Louis, and San Francisco. And then there's Bobby Flay, who has just opened a string of Bobby's (continued on page 64)

## THE BURGER KING

There was a time when hamburger meat was just hamburger meat. Pat LaFrieda Jr. (pictured far right), the third-generation co-owner of the New York City wholesale meat purveyor Pat LaFrieda Wholesale Meat Purveyors, has changed all that. "If you were a chef a few years ago, it used to be a matter of 'I like this guy's chopped beef or I like this guy's,'" says LaFrieda. "It was based on trust: you didn't really know what was in it." For years LaFrieda's family had been grinding a house blend of chuck, brisket, and boneless short



rib without marketing it as anything but chopped beef; it was simply their hamburger meat—really, really good hamburger meat. Then, five years ago, the company was approached

by Danny Meyer, proprietor of a local burger joint called Shake Shack, who wanted LaFrieda to create a custom blend for his restaurant. LaFrieda ground and taste-tested more than 20 different variations of meat blends before settling on one (the recipe remains a secret). Shake Shack's business boomed, and LaFrieda had an idea: why not start offering custom hamburger blends to other restaurants? He now sells proprietary hamburger blends to more than 50 restaurants, mostly in New York. LaFrieda also makes

what many New York burger aficionados believe to be the ne plus ultra of hamburger meat: his top-secret "Black Label" blend. It's sold at the newly refurbished Minetta Tavern in Manhattan's Greenwich Village; the restaurant offers a Black Label burger for \$26. It's a truly luscious sandwich, infused with the deep, almost musky taste of dry-aged premium steak. Meanwhile, LaFrieda keeps grinding, blending, and refining. "Everyone needs a niche," he says, "and this turned out to be ours." —Todd Coleman



## BURGERS



# A GUIDE TO HAMBURGER MEAT

Sometimes we crave lean burgers; other times, we want the handheld equivalent of a dry-aged steak. The cuts and styles of beef featured here are available in most markets and can be used on their own or blended together. Buy ground meat, or ask your butcher to grind it for you; many super-market meat counters are equipped for the task. For instructions on how to grind burger meat at home, visit [saveur.com/issue122](http://saveur.com/issue122).



**Chuck** The well-marbled and full-flavored shoulder, or chuck, of the steer has a near-perfect ratio of meat to fat when ground (80 to 20 is considered ideal for burgers).



**Round** The hindquarters, or round, has little intramuscular fat. Once ground, it makes for a lean patty that takes well to rich accompaniments.

**Grass-fed** Less fatty than corn-fed beef, the meat of pasture-raised cattle produces a lean hamburger with a clean, mineral flavor. You can add a bit of ground fat to your blend for more flavor.



**Ground hamburger** What's labeled "hamburger" in the supermarket is typically a blend of trimmings from various steaks and roasts. Often, the fat percentage is indicated on the label.

**Short rib** Short ribs are meaty and tender and make for a particularly sumptuous burger. Ask your butcher to grind boneless short rib, also called chuck flap tail.



**Brisket** This is one of the most flavorful cuts for burgers. Look for brisket labeled "flat cut" if you like a leaner grind; ask for the fattier "second cut" or "nose cut" for all-out richness.

**Sirloin** Sirloin cuts are amply marbled and full of beefy flavor. When you want the flavor of the patty to stand out, go with top sirloin (pictured), tri-tip, or knuckle.

**Wagyu** In the U.S., Japanese Wagyu cows have been cross-bred with those of other breeds to produce unsurpassably tender, melt-in-your-mouth beef. Ground Wagyu makes for a seriously luxe burger.

**Dry-aged beef** Including some ground dry-aged beef (from cuts like the rib eye, pictured) will give your burgers a concentrated, steak-like flavor.





## BURGERS



# GREAT ADDITIONS

You can make a very tasty burger using nothing but salt and pepper, but adding other seasonings to ground beef opens up worlds of possibilities. The spices, sauces, herbs, and other flavorings pictured below range in taste from the understated (red wine) to the bold (chile sauce). Just how much to add will depend on your tastes; below you'll find our suggested amounts to use for one pound of beef (enough for two thick burgers).



**Sriracha** A teaspoon or so of this Asian-style garlic-chile sauce imparts a subtle heat and sweetness.



**Worcestershire sauce** A few dashes of this sweet-tart sauce lend tang and depth.

**Dijon mustard** A teaspoon brightens the flavor of cooked beef with mellow spiciness.



**Anchovies** Pound an oil-cured filet and mix it well into the beef for briny flavor.

**Sesame oil** A drizzle of this East Asian staple adds a nutty essence.



**Thyme** Add a teaspoon of fresh thyme leaves for a subtle, woody taste.

**Capers** A teaspoon of finely chopped capers gives burgers a pleasing, concentrated saltiness.

**Red wine** A few tablespoons of a dry, tannic red wine infuses burgers with peppery notes.



**Steak sauce** A tablespoon of sweet and tangy A1—a condiment made with tomatoes, vinegar, and dried fruit—intensifies a burger's beefiness.

**Dried mushrooms** A few dried porcinis that have been ground in a spice grinder give patties a deeper meatiness.



**Onion** Half of a small, coarsely grated onion provides sweet notes and juiciness to burgers.

**Herbed bread crumbs** A tablespoon of herbed bread crumbs helps bind the ground meat and adds a toasty flavor.



**Onion soup mix** A few pinches of this powdered mixture of beef bouillon and dried onion enhances a burger's meaty depth.

**Egg** An egg enriches the flavor of beef and helps to keep the burger moist as it cooks.







**M**ichael Psilakis is no burger purist. Like many chefs, he embraced the burger and then blew it apart, using its familiar form as a canvas for creating something new. The version he serves at Anthos, his Greek restaurant in New York City, is a brilliant reinvention (see page 82 for a recipe). It's made with lamb, not beef, and a slew of spices and vegetables, including coriander, dill, clove, cumin, grilled onion, and garlic, which are worked right into the ground meat. There are some smart, chef-y touches that you might not even recognize as you devour the thing: because lamb is lean, the chef adds some ground pork and wraps the patty in caul fat, which accounts for its incomparable flavor and juiciness. It's topped with a lemony feta, olive,

## LIKE MOM USED TO MAKE

and sun-dried tomato salad. The whole thing is exuberant, deeply satisfying, and a bit renegade.

Home cooks and chefs have long made a habit of turning unlikely ingredients into burgers, be it diced raw tuna bound together with wasabi or grilled marinated portobello mushroom caps. But Psilakis's version seems less ersatz, perhaps because the flavors have traditional roots; the burger is based on a heavily seasoned Cypriot sausage. And it's not far removed from the backyard burgers that Psilakis's Greek mother used to make when he was growing up on Long Island. They were just as heavily seasoned, with fresh dill, bread crumbs, and egg. "It was her attempt to make an American food with what she knew and liked," Psilakis says. "No matter what she put in them, we ate them with ketchup, and they were always delicious."

—Dana Bowen



## BURGERS

(continued from page 60) Burger Palaces across Long Island and New Jersey. At the end of the day, I confess that this frenzy to elevate the food, to load it up with expensive or extravagant ingredients, tends only to intensify my craving for a good, old-fashioned backyard hamburger.

THE BEST BURGER I HAVE EVER TASTED was, in fact, produced in the backyard of my friend Emily Green, a writer, who had invited a bunch of people, including the chef Nancy Silverton, for burgers one Sunday afternoon. She'd asked Nancy to make the burgers, and they were splendid: succulent, meaty, perfectly balanced, and perfectly seasoned. They were cooked to medium rare on a well-seasoned cast-iron griddle, topped with a thin layer of melted gruyère, a slice of ripe tomato, some lettuce, slivers of avocado, a little chile-spiked mayo, and ketchup, and served on a soft bun. Impromptu as the meal seemed, a lot of thought had gone into those hamburger sandwiches, from the grind of the meat (a coarse blend of chuck with some sirloin fat added in) and the seasoning (just salt, applied right before cooking) to the toasting of the soft bakery buns (which she'd chosen over the ciabatta from her own La Brea Bakery).

Watching Nancy cook those perfect burgers on that late-summer afternoon made me pause to reflect on the burger makers who had come before her: the line cooks and lunch counter operators, the celebrity chefs with their truffles and foie gras, and all those countless spatula-wielding dads—including my own, who used to press down on his sizzling burgers, sending the flavorful juices into the coals. Even so, his burgers always tasted great. —Leslie Brenner, restaurant critic for the Dallas Morning News

## CHAIN REACTION

THE FAST-FOOD HAMBURGER GETS BACK TO BASICS

AS FAR AS FAST-FOOD BURGERS are concerned, they don't get much better than the ones from In-N-Out Burger, the family-owned chain of about 200 take-out restaurants in California, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada. Those burgers are made from fresh beef chuck that's

ground daily and never frozen; the buns are baked fresh and are grilled so that they have a nice, crunchy edge; and even the french fries are hand-sliced on-site. The kitchens of In-N-Out's gleaming, white-tiled locations don't have microwaves, freezers, or warming tables, because every sandwich is made to order: griddled patties of beef layered with fresh tomato slices (exclusively from the center of the fruit) and shreds of iceberg lettuce (from the crunchiest inner leaves).

It's still fast food but very tasty all the same, so much so that In-N-Out has garnered a cult following over the years. Even Eric Schlosser, who wrote *Fast Food Nation* (HarperCollins, 2001), the ultimate indictment of America's industrialized, on-the-go food culture, calls himself a fan. Indeed, the way In-N-Out operates seems to contradict happily everything we associate with fast food today: mechanized kitchens delivering overprocessed industrial food to undiscerning customers. And yet, seen within the arc of the history of fast-food burger joints, In-N-Out represents less a great leap forward than a nostalgic look back.

When the caterer Harry Snyder and his wife, Esther, opened the first In-N-Out, in Baldwin Park, California, in 1948, the fast-food hamburger was in a sort of golden adolescence. Though the concept of franchising—licensing out operations to independent contractors—was being toyed with by some entrepreneurs, most of the burger joints popping up just after World War II were still, by today's standards, old-fashioned, from-scratch operations. What made them novel, and so poised to conquer postwar American appetites, was their mode of delivery: fast, systematized, and uniform—qualities that were immensely alluring at the dawn of the automobile age. (In-N-Out's particular innovation, a momentous one, was a two-way speaker outside of the building that allowed customers to order from their cars without the presence of a carhop.)

The fast-food hamburger as we know it was born in 1921, at a restaurant in Wichita, Kansas, called White Castle. There, a fry cook named Walter Anderson is said to have married beef and bun for the very first time. What matters more than the invention of (continued on page 68)

Kiana Souza, a happy customer at an In-N-Out burger in Mill Valley, California, facing page.

### BURGER FRANCHISE FIRSTS



#### 1921 THE CHAIN IS BORN

Walter Anderson and Billy Ingram open the first White Castle, in Wichita, Kansas, modeling the design on the Chicago Water Tower, one of few buildings to survive the 1871 Chicago fire. By 1930, there are more than 100 locations.

#### 1937 BIG BOY GETS A BROTHER

Bob Wian, founder of Bob's Big Boy in Glendale, California, is one of the first to license out a restaurant concept to independent owners. The



franchisees get to use both the Big Boy mascot (pictured) and the original restaurant's signature double-decker burger.

#### 1948 CAR MEETS BURGER

Harry and Esther Snyder open the first drive-through ham-

burger stand, In-N-Out Burger, in Baldwin Park, California.

#### 1957 BIRTH OF THE WHOPPER

Burger King's quarter-pound flame-broiled beef patty with sundry toppings debuts as the biggest chain burger to date.



**1963 HEEERE'S RON-ALD!** The original Ronald McDonald, played by Willard Scott, appears in a commercial that airs on a Washington, D.C., television station. When Ronald becomes the McDonald's "national spokesperson" in 1966, he is played by Coco, a



clown from the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

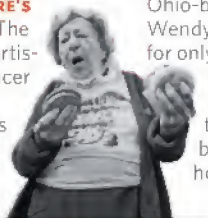
#### 1979 BURGERS GET HAPPY

McDonald's introduces the Happy Meal, a colorful paper box filled with a kid-size burger, fries, and a drink. The inaugural edi-

tion has a circus wagon theme.

#### 1984 "WHERE'S THE BEEF?"

The former advertising firm Dancer Fitzgerald Sample hires Clara Peller, a four-foot-



ten-inch octogenarian, to star in a TV commercial for its client the Ohio-based chain Wendy's. The ad runs for only nine months, but Peller's lament "Where's the beef?" becomes a household phrase.

#### 2005 BURGERS GO GREEN

Goodburger (which now has four locations) opens in New York City, offering additive-free burgers made from beef ground on-site. The same year, the first organic burger joint, Elevation Burger, opens in Virginia.







## BURGERS



## THE PERFECT CHEESE

Given the choice between a burger with cheese and one without, we go for the cheeseburger every time. Mild-tasting and quick-melting american cheese remains the most popular choice, but many other cheeses—bold blue, buttery brie, sharp cheddar, and more—introduce interesting flavors and textures. Here are nine of the best burger companions. (See page 108 for sources.)



**Blue** Its bold, salty tartness is balanced by a creamy texture. Our choice is Rogue Creamery's Crater Lake Blue, from Oregon.

**Pepper jack** Monterey jack cheese flecked with jalapeño peppers gives burgers a spicy edge. Maple Leaf in Monroe, Wisconsin, makes an excellent version with red and green jalapeños.

**Limburger** This strong washed-rind cheese tastes great on a beefy, juicy burger. Only one company makes limburger in this country today: the Chalet Cheese Cooperative of Monroe, Wisconsin.

**American** Presliced, individually wrapped, sunny yellow, and quick melting: it's the classic hamburger cheese for a reason.

**Fresh goat cheese** Goat cheese adds tangy notes to burgers. One of our favorites is a ricotta-like goats' milk and cows' milk blend from California called Délice de la Vallée.

**Brie** Ripe French brie, with the bloomy rind left intact, takes on a silky texture and a rich aroma when melted atop a burger.

**Emmentaler** Swiss cheese—a k a emmentaler—stays firm around the edges after it melts over a burger. We're fans of Edelweiss emmentaler from Wisconsin.

**Cheddar** When melted over a burger, sharp aged cheeses like Cabot's Clothbound cheddar, from Vermont, can add a pleasant hint of caramel.

**Parmigiano-reggiano** This salty, nutty-tasting cheese can be grated and baked on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet at 350 degrees for about ten minutes to produce crisp frico wafers, which can be a fabulous burger topping.





REGULAR 2.65

KING 3.15

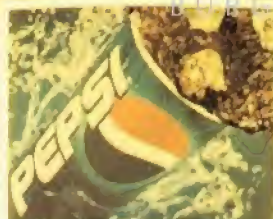
CHZ .35¢ PEPPERS  
DLX

CONEYS

FREEDOM FRIES - 2.65

STEAK &amp; SHAKE 5.40

GRILLED CHZ 2.65

B.L.T. 3.65 SHAKES & 2.65  
FLOATS

DRINKS 1.50

**BREAKFAST SPECIAL**  
TWO EGGS WITH MEAT  
HB & TOAST 4.95  
SHORT STACK 3.00  
FREEDOM TOAST 3.00  
OMELET 5.25

ALL YOU CAN EAT  
BISCUIT & GRAVY 3.75  
COFFEE 1.00 W. MEAL .75  
HOURS 7:00AM - 8:30PM  
SID'S IS CLOSED SUNDAYS



One reason to visit Sid's Diner in El Reno, Oklahoma, is the hospitality. A small town 35 miles west of Oklahoma City, El Reno is the kind of place where nice-guy burger joint operators like Marty Hall (pictured, behind the counter) are local celebrities. He spends his days flipping burgers, turning around to dispense wisdom and life lessons to the regulars in his gentle Oklahoma drawl.

The other reason to visit Sid's is to eat the fried onion burger (see page 82 for a recipe), which

## FLAT-OUT GOOD

happens to be one of the best of a local breed that was invented in El Reno (at a spot, now gone, called Hamburger Inn) during the Great Depression. The burger's distinguishing feature—lots and lots of onions cooked right into the patty—began as a way of stretching a day's ground-beef supply. Marty, who started making the local specialty as a grill cook 41 years ago, places a small ball of ground beef on a hot flattop griddle, showers the meat with a heap of thinly sliced vidalia onions, and then presses the patty down until the onions and beef become one. When the burger becomes crunchy and browned on the bottom, it's flipped so that the same thing can happen to the other side. The result is a burger like none other, one that sparkles with sweet, caramelized-onion flavor.

The last time I was at Sid's, I asked Marty whether his burgers had changed over the 20 years that his place has been open. "Cooking burgers is like laying brick," he told me. "Your best comes with years of experience. It becomes like an art." —George Motz, author of *Hamburger America* (Running Press, 2008)





## BURGERS

(continued from page 64) the sandwich itself, though, is the way Anderson and his business partner, a real estate agent named Billy Ingram, pitched it to the public. The two men changed the image of the hamburger sandwich—early versions of which had typically been sold from unseemly street carts and lunch counters—through branding: the business's name suggested purity and nobility, and the company promoted such airs by hiring a spokesperson to persuade women's groups that White Castle hamburgers were wholesome fare, ideal for family meals.

Bolstering White Castle's claim was the dainty, square burgers' near-perfect uniformity, which Anderson and Ingram proudly attributed to the White Castle System: an organizational plan that allowed cooks at any location (by 1930 Anderson and Ingram were running 100 more or less identical restaurants) to turn out lots of burgers with minimal blips in quality. As Henry Ford had done for cars, the White Castle founders were channeling the mechanical, modernist life force of the 1920s, the respect for systemization and sameness, into the making of burgers. If his burgers projected the image of progress and purity, Ingram reasoned, Americans would flock to White Castle to eat them.

Of course, they did, and by the mid-1930s, there were plenty of copycats: White Tower (in the Midwest), Royal Castle (in Miami), White Manna (in New Jersey), and others, most of them touting their own, proprietary "system". But, despite the success of their efficient production scheme, Ingram and Anderson were able to expand their empire only so far, because they insisted on personally supervising operations. For burger joint operators with greater ambitions, the future lay in franchising.

As it happens, the history of the modern-day global burger franchise begins the same year that In-N-Out was born. In 1948, two brothers, Richard and Maurice McDonald, opened a glass-walled, octagon-shaped hamburger stand called McDonald's Famous Hamburgers in San Bernardino, California. A few years later, a Chicago-born milk shake machine salesman named Ray Kroc walked into the restaurant and was awed by the brothers' ultra-efficient, largely automated system for making burgers—a Cadillac to White Castle's Model T. In 1955, he became the McDonald brothers' franchise distributor. Five years after that, he had trained franchisees for 100 locations across the United States. And in 1968, with 1,000 restaurants under its umbrella, McDonald's made the switch from fresh meat to frozen, and no one seemed to mind.

By then, big, profitable burger franchises were becoming the norm, and their success was not ignored by corporate America. The Pillsbury food conglomerate bought Burger King in 1967. General Foods bought

the rival chain Burger Chef the same year. And in 1968 Ralston Purina acquired Jack in the Box, a popular California drive-through chain. More corners were cut: cheaper beef; artificial flavorings in the patties and buns. A few big chains made a show of bucking the trend—most notably Wendy's, which was founded in 1969 and offered "old-fashioned" burgers made with fresh beef and served with toppings that the customer could pick and choose—but the mold had been cast.

All the while, In-N-Out remained willfully stuck in its 1940s-era track. Harry and Esther Snyder never licensed out their operation, nor did they expand their menu beyond burgers, fries, and drinks. By the mid-1970s, when national burger franchising was skyrocketing, In-N-Out had only 18 branches, all run by Harry and Esther and their two sons, Guy and Rich. When Esther passed away, in 2006, ownership went to her 24-year-old granddaughter, Lynsi Martinez, whose brother-in-law Mark Taylor was named president. In an interview with the *Orange County Register*, Taylor stated that "the family is absolutely committed to keeping the company private and family-operated".

The journalist Stacy Perman, in her book *In-N-Out Burger: A Behind-the-Counter Look at the Fast-Food Chain That Breaks All the Rules* (Collins Business, 2009), points out that keeping In-N-Out in the family is just one way the Snyders represent an anomaly in the fast-food world. "Frequently the subject of rumor and speculation, the fastidiously private company has always shunned the kind of publicity that its competitors routinely courted," writes Perman, whose exhaustively researched book was written without the company's cooperation. "And while it has rarely bothered to counter or clarify the murmurings, the conjecture has touched on everything from the recipe for its secret sauce to the meaning of the twin palm trees planted in a cross formation at each store."

That merely sticking to an older way of making burgers has generated such an obsessive mania among fans seems to be evidence of a desire on the part of the burger-eating public to get back to basics. And while a number of burger chains these days are touting their use of fresh (even, in some cases, organic) ingredients and others are using nostalgia as a hook—think Johnny Rockets, whose 200-plus franchises around the world are modeled after retro burger joints—In-N-Out seems content to let its burgers speak for themselves.

All of which is not to say the company does nothing to advance its own mystique. A case in point is its "secret menu", a list, formerly known only by word of mouth, that includes custom burgers with names like the Flying Dutchman (double meat and cheese, no bun) (continued on page 76)

## ART AND BURGERS

It wouldn't be a stretch to say that the hamburger is second only to the Stars and Stripes as a globally recognized symbol for all things American. Beef and bun are soft, round targets for those who have appointed themselves defenders against the encroachment of fast food, agribusiness, American imperialism, or some combination thereof. "Whether or not hamburgers can be considered good food is a personal matter. But then, of course, I'm no fan of hamburgers," said Jack Lang, then the French minister of culture, in 1991, to a classroom of ten-year-olds, on the occasion of the founding of a primary-school



course in French gastronomy. "Better a day of tortellini than a hundred days of hamburgers!" went an early rallying cry of the Slow Food movement. On the other side of the trenches, cultural commentators have trotted

out the burger as the embodiment of American-style entrepreneurship, representing the essence of our country's egalitarian spirit.

The potency of this singular, universally recognized food has not been lost on artists—especially the great Pop and Photorealist painters and sculptors of the 20th century. Its roundness, its compactness, and its sheer everywhere-ness in America's graphic universe was manna for those movements. Artists like the Swedish-born Claes Oldenburg returned to the food again and again; his slablike, four-foot-high canvas, foam, and rubber *Floor Burger* from

1962 became one of his most iconic works. Andy Warhol, not surprisingly, also found inspiration in the hamburger. In addition to making silk-screen prints like the one pictured at left, Warhol paid homage to the burger in a short film made in 1981 by the Danish filmmaker Jorgen Leth. In it, Warhol, facing the camera and seated alone at an empty table, eats a Burger King hamburger. Maybe his solitary meal was an acknowledgment of the burger's symbolic role in modern life; perhaps it was a stunt. Then again, maybe Warhol was just hungry. —David McAninch



## BURGERS



# THE TASTIEST TOPPINGS

There's almost no limit to what works well on top of a burger; countless foods provide a pleasing contrast in taste or texture to the meat and the bun. Sometimes—in the case of cool and crunchy coleslaw, say, or fiery peppers—that contrast is striking; other times, as with avocado or caramelized onions, it's subtle. Here are 18 of our favorites.



**Zucchini pickles** These turmeric-spiked pickles lend spicy sweetness to the burger at Zuni Café in San Francisco. (See page 84 for a recipe.)

**Cornichons** sliced into strips add sour notes and snap.

**Red onions** are a classic topping; briefly soak slices in ice water to temper their intensity.

**Tomato** A meaty, sweet presence between beef and bun.

**Olive tapenade** Store-bought or homemade, it lends a briny, Mediterranean accent.

**Avocado** A few slices can stand in for mayo and impart a buttery richness.

**Peperoncini** These brined peppers give mild heat.

**Alfalfa sprouts**, with their fresh, almost grassy taste, pair well with beef.

**Roasted red peppers** give burgers a smoky, sweet accent.

**Coleslaw** adds a cool crunch to burgers.

**Pickled beets** An earthy alternative to sweet pickles.

**Caramelized onions** Few toppings are more delicious than sweet sautéed onions.

**Pickled jalapeño slices** convey an aromatic, tingly heat.

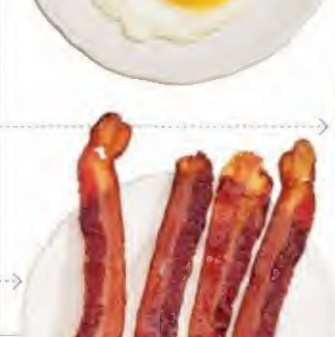
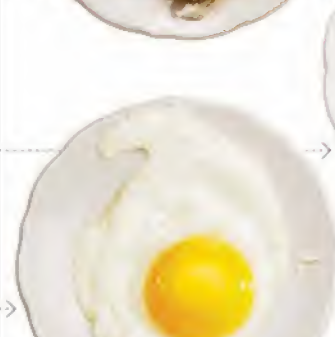
**Fried egg** The soft yolk mingles beautifully with the beef.

**Sautéed mushrooms** bolster a burger's savory qualities.

**Sautéed garlic** A bold substitute for onions.

**Bibb lettuce** A velvety alternative to crunchy iceberg.

**Bacon** Smoked, cured pork belly adds a salty, meaty note.





BURGERS







**W**hen the '21' Club, that legendary haunt of New York City's high society, put a hamburger on its menu back in 1950, more than a few patrons considered the move a tongue-in-cheek nod toward the plebeian, but of course it fit right into the former speakeasy's clubby vibe. With its price tag of \$2.75 (which could have bought you an entire meal elsewhere), it became the world's first fancy burger.

Originally served without benefit of bun or bread, it might more accurately have been called a Salis-

## A CLASS ACT

bury steak, seasoned as it was with celery, nutmeg, and worcestershire sauce, in a thick brown gravy. That's the way the '21' burger came to the table for nearly four decades, until the chef Alain Sailhac and the chef-restaurateur Anne Rozenzweig took over in 1986. The duo ditched the old-fashioned seasonings and tucked a big pat of herb butter inside the patty; the butter both flavored the meat and kept it tender and juicy. Problem was, loyalists did not want a better burger; they wanted the same old mound of meat they were used to. So, when Michael Lomonaco became chef in 1988, he restored order, but just: he served the burger open-face atop a grilled, thyme-scented bruschetta.

The current incarnation harks back to the burger's roots, with minced onion, spices like coriander and fennel seeds, fresh herbs, and even duck fat, only nowadays it's served on a bun—a puffy brioche that, while delicious, makes the whole thing too big and awkward to eat out of hand. Some burgers, we suppose, are meant to be tackled with a knife and fork. (For a recipe for the '21' Club burger, see page 80.) —The Editors



## BURGERS



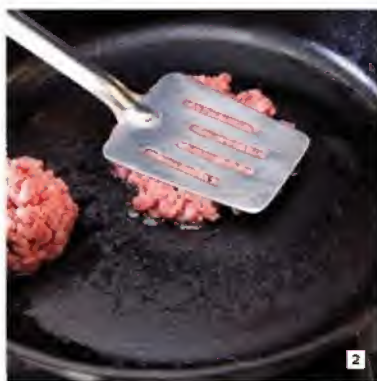
## PUTTING HEAT TO THE MEAT

Among burger aficionados, no question is more hotly debated than that of which cooking method produces the tastiest results. If you ask us, there are four great methods, each yielding a different look, texture, and taste. From the smoky kiss of a backyard grill to the satisfying char imparted by a cast-iron skillet, here are the whys and hows behind our favorite techniques.

### PAN FRYING

A well-seasoned cast-iron skillet is the ideal tool for making old-fashioned thin, diner-style burgers because it mimics a restaurant's flattop griddle in generating a high, dry heat. George Motz, the author of *Hamburger America* (Running Press, 2008), recommends the following technique, popular with short-order cooks in the Midwest. First, heat a dry cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat until it smokes slightly, about 2 minutes.

**1** Using an ice cream scoop for portioning (see page 102), place a scoop of meat in the skillet. **2** Smash the meat flat with a metal spatula. Flattening creates a flavorful sear and crisp, uneven edges as the burger sizzles in its own fat. Cook the patties, flipping them once, until they're browned and cooked through, about 4 minutes total. **3** Place a slice of cheese atop each patty and keep the skillet covered until the cheese has melted, about 1 minute.



### BROILING

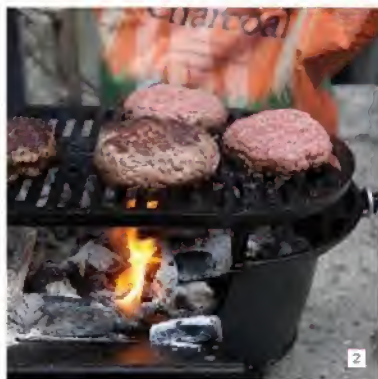
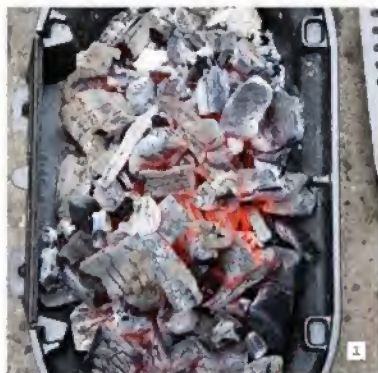
This is our favorite rainy-day technique because it yields results similar to what you get with a charcoal or gas grill. We like to use an electric toaster oven instead of a regular oven broiler because the toaster's relatively compact cooking space concentrates the heat more intensely on the meat. Turn the toaster oven to broil and place the oven's rack as close as possible to the heating element. **1** Put two 6-8-oz. burgers on an aluminum foil-lined baking sheet fitted with a separate rack.

**2** Broil the patties until the meat is nicely browned on one side; flip burgers and cook for about 1 minute more. **3** With this method it should take about 8 minutes to cook two 8-ounce burgers to medium rare.





## BURGERS



## GRILLING

Cooking over an open flame creates a savory, smoky flavor. We like to cook burgers on a small charcoal grill, such as a hibachi or the Lodge Sportsman's Grill (pictured), because the grate sits close to the heat, making it easier to achieve an invitingly charred exterior.

**1** Build a medium-hot charcoal fire (the coals are ready when they're fully ashed over but are still hot enough that you can't hold your hand an inch above them for more than 2 seconds).

**2** Place burgers on the grill and cook, waiting for at least 4 minutes before flipping; **3** cook until both sides are browned and the burger is cooked to the desired doneness, about 10 minutes for medium rare for 8-ounce burgers. Let the burgers rest for about 5 minutes before serving.

## STEAMING

At Ted's Restaurant in Meriden, Connecticut, owner Paul Duberek cooks hundreds of his famous white cheddar cheeseburgers a week in his patented steaming cabinets. It's a cooking style that hasn't found much of a fan base outside Connecticut, but steaming can produce winning results, as the meat stays moist while it cooks in its juices. Steaming at home is easy: place a rack in the bottom of a large wide-bottomed pot, pour in  $\frac{1}{2}$ " water, and bring water to a boil over medium-high heat. Meanwhile, press ground beef into each of 2 empty (and cleaned) 5-ounce tuna cans. Place 2 thick slices of white cheddar into 2 more cans. **1** Transfer cans to rack and cover pot; steam until burger is cooked through and the cheese is gooey, 12-14 minutes (for medium rare). To remove cans, grip can edges with tongs; **2** use a knife to release beef from can and transfer to a bun. **3** Pour the molten cheese over the burger.





## BURGERS



## SIGNATURE SAUCES

Nothing distinguishes a burger quite the way its sauce does. Each of the nine condiments pictured below offers a distinctly different flavor. A few of them are inspired by the house sauce at a venerated hamburger restaurant; others are classics that you can make at home or buy from the supermarket.



**Barbecue sauce** adds a smoky dimension to burgers. We love the peppery version ladled onto the "hickory burger" at the Apple Pan, a 62-year-old lunch counter in Los Angeles.

**Sweet pepper relish** is typically a mix of sweet peppers, vinegar, and spices. Our favorite version is Howard's, made in Massachusetts.

**Spiked ketchup** A pinch of curry powder or smoked paprika adds intrigue to sweet ketchup. The Los Angeles restaurant Umami Burger adds anchovy, truffle salt, oyster sauce, and soy sauce to its house ketchup. (See page 84 for a recipe.)

**Aïoli** This garlic-spiked, lemony mayonnaise brightens the flavor of a burger and produces a creamy texture.

**Thousand island dressing** The classic blend of mayonnaise, pickle relish, and chili sauce goes beautifully with the flavor of charred beef.

**"Nut burger" sauce** One of our favorite discoveries is this weirdly perfect sauce, invented at Matt's Place Drive-In in Butte, Montana: a mixture of Azar's Fancy Nut ice cream sundae topping and Miracle Whip.

**Mustard** Our choice is French's Classic yellow mustard, whose bite is a natural companion to ketchup and beef.

**Flavored mayonnaise** Blend fresh or dried herbs into store-bought mayo. For a spicy spread, purée one canned chipotle, one tablespoon of the adobo sauce it's packed in, and one cup of mayo.

**Chili** When we make beef chili, we always freeze leftovers so that we'll have a spicy, supremely satisfying topping for our burgers.







To believe in the chili burger is to turn matters slightly on their head because the usual criteria of a good burger—the char of the meat, the toastiness of the bun, and the crispness of the lettuce and pickles—are secondary. What matters above all else is that ladleful of mildly sweet and spicy beef chili. For more than 60 years, the chili burger at Tommy's in Los Angeles—particularly its first location, on the corner of Beverly and Rampart boulevards—has been the gold standard of this toothsome genre. That Tommy's didn't invent the chili burger

## NAPKINS, PLEASE

(that honor goes to a long-gone LA restaurant called Ptomaine Tommy's) seems beside the point.

Started in 1946 by one Tommy Koulax, the son of Greek immigrants, Tommy's was built for American car culture: the dining area is a narrow ledge of wood that snakes around the parking lot and encircles a service window. There you'll be asked chili or not. You answer, of course, in the affirmative and are presented with a thing of beauty, temptation itself enclosed in yellow waxed paper. You unwrap the burger halfway, to keep it from spilling. You bite into it: first the pillowy bun, then the tangy-sweet chili, and finally the beef. Pure satisfaction.

Look around you. In the smoky dusk, beneath the improbably gorgeous shades of sky that an LA evening is capable of producing, you feel as if you'd found your way to the city's very heart. Perched on that wooden ledge alongside you is a cross section of Angelenos: *cholos*, clubbers, cops. At this moment, you are all of like hearts and minds. You wish you'd ordered a double, so you get up and return to the window. Give me one, with chili. —*Patric Kuh, restaurant critic for Los Angeles magazine*



## BURGERS

(continued from page 68) and the Double Double Animal Style (two patties cooked with mustard and served with onions, extra cheese, and sauce). The secret menu isn't really secret anymore—you can find it on the company's website—but it helps make In-N-Out's customers feel special, as if, amid all that sameness out there, they were being given something unique. —*Dana Bowen and Josh Ozersky, author of The Hamburger: A History (Yale University Press, 2008)*

## DOING IT THEIR WAY

LOCAL BURGER BREEDS ARE STILL GOING STRONG

**T**HE HAMBURGER MAY BE AMERICA'S national dish, but it's still a fiercely regional food. Even in our homogenized, fast-food epoch, burgers come to the table in a juicily awesome range of styles: from the crunchy, shoestring potato-topped "frita" found in the Cuban-American communities of Miami to the sumptuous, butter-topped burgers of Wisconsin's dairylands.

Some of the tastiest and most tenacious regional variants hail from the South. Take the delicious pimento cheese burger, topped with that cherished Southern condiment pimento cheese: a piquant spread of cheddar (usually), pimentos, mayo, and spices. Dolloped atop a hot griddled patty, spicy pimento cheese melts and blends beautifully with charred beef. Versions appear throughout the Southern states, but Columbia, South Carolina, is the locus of the PC burger, as it's often called, according to the Southern food expert John T. Edge in his book *Hamburgers & Fries* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2005). "Every third joint serves one," he writes of Columbia and its environs, "and at least half of them are good."

The South's burger innovations did not stop there. Born of scarcity during World War I and the Depression, the "slug burger" or "dough burger," found primarily in Mississippi, uses cornmeal, potato meal, cracker meal, or other extenders to make the meat go farther. A similar exercise in frugality can be found a couple states over in central Oklahoma, where cooks mash nearly half a thinly sliced onion into a patty to make a fried onion burger, almost caramelizing the vegetable on a blazing griddle as it becomes intertwined with beef.

Out West, in New Mexico, the burger takes on an even more distinctly regional cast. Green chiles, the state's beloved hot peppers, are roasted, chopped up, and strewn atop burgers. The chiles are held in place with just the right amount of cheese—white cheddar in the case of the most

famous purveyor, the Bobcat Bite diner in Santa Fe. Another great version can be found at the Owl Bar in the central New Mexico town of San Antonio, where cooks reportedly started serving the burgers at the request of the nuclear physicists working at nearby Los Alamos. (Talk about a burger with a bang.)

Up north in Minneapolis, you'll find the Jucy Lucy (at the 55-year-old Matt's Bar), the Juicy Lucy (at the 5-8 Club), and other burgers bearing some similar spelling of the name. The over-the-top qualities of these outwardly normal-looking sandwiches fly under the radar—until you bite into one and its molten core of american cheese oozes out. Many variations on this specialty, which became popular in the 1950s, exist, some with jalapeño jack cheese at their core. Wherever you're eating one, let it cool a bit before you bite in, lest you suffer a scalded tongue.

Some regional styles owe not to the ingredients or to where you hide them but to the cooking method. Sometime in the 1930s, for example, cooks in south-central Connecticut started steaming their burgers: at places like Ted's Restaurant in Meriden, they pack ground beef into little stainless-steel trays and place them in a steamer, along with trays of white cheddar, which gets poured onto the ultrajuicy steamed patty just after it's been bunned. A similarly unorthodox technique surfaced in the Midwest, where some diner cooks use the back of a spatula to smash the plump patty into the second dimension. As the meat spreads out on the griddle, it cooks in its own juices, creating little pockets of crunchy, salty chewiness. The two-year-old, Colorado-based chain Smashburger has been spreading this particular gospel across the country.

Indeed, many burger styles that were once regional have since entered the national vernacular. For one, there's the patty melt, the rye toast-flanked burger that is believed to have started at the Biff's and Tiny Naylor's chains in Southern California in the 1940s and have become a coffee shop staple nationwide. Or consider sliders, which began as White Castle's one-inch-square burgers and are now the darling of chefs nationwide. Are other exotic breeds—like the peanut butter-smothered goober burger specific to Sedalia, Missouri, or the tangy slaw burgers of North Carolina—destined for universal acclaim? Only time will tell. (See **THE PANTRY**, page 108, for information on where to find some of these great regional burgers.) —*Adam Kuban, editor of the blog A Hamburger Today*

**A pimento cheese burger, a favorite Southern variety, facing page. (See page 82 for a recipe.)**

## 6 GREAT BURGER BOOKS



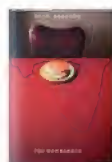
**HAMBURGER: A GLOBAL HISTORY** (REACTION BOOKS, 2008) Written by Andrew F. Smith, editor of *The Oxford Companion to American Food & Drink*, this fun read charts the burger's history from 19th-century lunch carts to international chains.



**HAMBURGER HEAVEN** (HYPERION, 1995) Jeffrey Tennyson, a designer who died in 2006, turned his collection of burger ephemera—vintage photos, advertising art, and such—into a one-of-a-kind coffee table book.



**BURGER BAR** (JOHN WILEY & SONS, 2009) Hubert Keller's cookbook, named for his restaurant, urges readers to take their burger making to new heights with recipes for blue cheese sliders, tuna burgers, and more.



**THE HAMBURGER** (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2008) Josh Ozersky's engaging narrative explores Americans' century-long obsession with burgers and chronicles how the food has evolved to reflect changing attitudes and tastes.



**HAMBURGER AMERICA** (RUNNING PRESS, 2008) George Motz, the man behind the award-winning 2004 documentary *Hamburger America*, gives us a richly illustrated road map to 100 of the country's best burger joints.



**HAMBURGERS AND FRIES** (G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, 2005) Writer and historian John T. Edge brings regional burger styles and their inventors vividly to life. This fascinating book has recipes for foods from pimento burgers to pickle sauce.







## BURGERS



# CLASSIC BUNS AND BREADS

The easygoing portability achieved by the application of a patty to a bun is central to the burger's appeal. It wasn't until 1921 that Walter Anderson, a cofounder of the White Castle chain, developed the first bun designed expressly for a burger. Nowadays, some 8 billion burger buns are produced each year, and the versions range from sesame seed-dotted domes to crusty artisanal rolls.



**Kaiser roll** The bulk and fluffy interior of this classic bun, good versions of which can be found in most supermarkets, make it an excellent vehicle for big, juicy backyard burgers.

**Onion roll** A bun studded with onion bits gives character to simple burgers. Farm to Market Bread Co. of Kansas City, Missouri, makes a terrific onion brioche.

**Sliced bread** Toasted sandwich bread was the original burger bun. Denser-textured breads, like the ones from Pepperidge Farm, hold up well to patties thick and thin.

**English muffin** Round and sturdy, the English muffin seems designed for burgers. Wolferman's, a bakery in Hope, Arkansas, makes a miniature muffin that's ideal for sliders. Toast it first.

**Pretzel roll** Salty and chewy, these rolls, made by J & J Snack Foods in Pennsauken, New Jersey, are sold nationwide.

**Ciabatta roll** The thick crust of Italian-style ciabatta provides structure for even the juiciest of burgers. The ciabatta rolls made by Amy's Bread in New York City are the gold standard.

**Potato roll** This sweet, pillowy roll is the softest of burger buns. Martin's in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, makes the definitive version, sold in supermarkets along the East Coast.

**Flavored bun** Rolls flavored with black olives, dill, and other seasonings add dimension to burgers. Chef Hubert Keller's truffle- and shallot-scented bun makes for an indulgent burger. (See page 84 for a recipe.)

**Sesame seed bun** This soft and fragrant bun has become the iconic hamburger platform. Arnold Bakery of Horsham, Pennsylvania, makes one of our favorite models. (See page 84 for a recipe.)







**T**he first time I ordered the burger at Sheep Station, an Australian-style pub in Brooklyn, New York, I wasn't sure what to make of it. In addition to the usual toppings of lettuce and tomato, the sandwich (see page 80 for a recipe) was stacked high with pickled beets, grilled pineapple slices, and a perfectly fried egg whose yolk was already dripping down the burger's sides by the time it arrived. I grabbed hold and gave it my biggest bite; heavenly. The earthy, tangy beets, the syrupy-sweet pineapple, the juicy beef—all of it was bound

## WITH THE WORKS

together by the decadent egg yolk. I was hooked.

"In Australia, this is what's called a burger with 'the lot,'" says Jason Crew (left), a co-owner and chef at Sheep Station. No one is sure when this particular combination of ingredients was first placed between hamburger buns, but Crew points out that beets stand in for pickles in nearly all sandwiches made Down Under and that pineapple is beloved in Australia. As for the egg, "maybe someone just wanted to eat a burger for breakfast", he speculates. However it came about, this style of burger became popular at the lunch counters, known as milk bars, that were common across the country in the postwar years and is now served at pubs and on backyard patios everywhere.

Eating at Sheep Station, I realized that the hamburger, born and raised on American soil and sent out into the world as the USA's culinary ambassador, was enjoying a third act of sorts: having been adapted to other cultures' traditions and tastes, it has returned home from its travels a new and glorious thing. —Georgia Freedman





## BURGERS



## '21' CLUB HAMBURGER

MAKES 4 BURGERS

John Greeley, the chef at the '21' Club in New York City (see page 70), grinds beef chuck and beef round with a couple of tablespoons of duck fat to make this tasty burger (see page 108). Store-bought ground beef is a fine substitute.

- 2 lbs. ground beef
- 1/4 cup minced yellow onion
- 2 tsp. minced fresh thyme
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper
- 1 tsp. minced fresh rosemary
- 1/4 tsp. ground coriander
- 1/4 tsp. ground fennel seed
- 1/8 tsp. cayenne
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 2-3 tbsp. melted duck fat, at room temperature (optional)
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 4 hamburger buns, toasted

1 In a large bowl, gently mix together the beef, onions, thyme, pepper, rosemary, coriander, fennel, cayenne, egg, and fat. Season with salt. Divide the meat into 4 portions; shape them into 1"-thick patties. Wrap patties in plastic wrap; refrigerate until cold. This will help to firm them up, as they're moister than most burgers owing to the addition of the duck fat and the egg.

2 Prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill to medium-high (or heat a tablespoon of canola oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat). Cook burgers, flipping once, until cooked to desired doneness, about 12 minutes total for medium rare. Serve on buns.

**Pairing Note** The Chateau Montelena Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 (\$42), from the Napa Valley, has layers of ripe red

fruit and earth that nicely complement this classic burger. —Ania Zaweija



## AUSSIE BURGER

MAKES 2 BURGERS

Over-the-top burgers like this one—topped with a fried egg, pickled beets, and pineapple rings—are popular in Australia (see page 79). This version comes from Sheep Station, a restaurant in Brooklyn, New York.

- 12 oz. ground beef
- 1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 1/4"-thick slices yellow onion
- 2 canned pineapple rings
- 4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 slices aged white cheddar
- 2 eggs
- 2 hamburger buns, toasted
- 2 leaves lettuce, preferably bibb
- 4 slices canned pickled beets
- 2 slices beefsteak tomato

1 In a bowl, combine beef, chile flakes, and garlic; season with salt and pepper. Form beef into two 1"-thick patties; transfer to a plate. Heat butter in an 8" nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add onion slices and cook, flipping occasionally, until browned (but not falling apart), 8-10 minutes. Remove skillet from heat; set onions aside.

2 Prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill to medium-high (or heat a tablespoon of canola oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat). Brush pineapple with 2 tbsp. oil; grill, flipping once, until lightly browned. Transfer pineapple to a plate; set aside. Grill burgers, flipping once, until cooked to desired doneness,

about 10 minutes total for medium rare. During the last minute of cooking, top burgers with cheese; let melt. Transfer burgers to a plate.

3 Meanwhile, heat remaining oil in a 10" nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add eggs; cook, covered, until yolks are just set, about 4 minutes. To bottom half of each bun, add lettuce, beets, tomato, onion slice, pineapple, and a burger. Top each with an egg; add top half of bun.

**Pairing Note** This sweet-rich burger calls for an amber beer with a slight bitterness, like Anchor Steam from San Francisco (\$13 for six bottles). —A.Z.



## ROSSINI BURGER

MAKES 4 BURGERS

This burger (see page 57), created by the chef Hubert Keller, is an adaptation of the French dish known as tournedos rossini: filet mignon with foie gras and truffles. (See page 108 for hard-to-find ingredients.)

- 2 lbs. ground beef
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tsp. cornstarch
- 1 cup hot veal demi-glace (see page 108)
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup madeira or red wine
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 4 truffled brioche buns (see page 84) or hamburger buns
- 10 oz. duck foie gras, sliced into 1/2"-thick slabs and chilled
- 1 oz. black truffle, thinly sliced

1 Shape beef into four 1"-thick patties; transfer to a plate. Season patties with salt and pepper; set aside.

2 Heat oven to 200°. In a bowl, whisk cornstarch with 2 tbsp. demi-glace; set aside. Heat oil in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add burgers; cook, flipping once, until browned and rare, about 6 minutes. Place burgers on a baking sheet; bake until medium rare, about 5 minutes. (This helps keep the burgers juicy.) Transfer to a plate. Meanwhile, discard fat from skillet; return to medium-high heat. Add madeira; cook, scraping browned bits from pan, until liquid is nearly evaporated, 1-2 minutes. Add remaining demi-glace; boil. Reduce by a third, 1-2 minutes. Stir in cornstarch mixture; cook until thickened, about 1 minute. Set sauce aside.

3 Butter buns with 2 tbsp. butter; toast on a baking sheet in oven. Heat a 12" skillet over medium heat. Season foie gras with salt and pepper; sear, flipping once, until browned, about 2 minutes. Transfer foie gras to paper towels. Whisk fat from skillet into reserved sauce.

4 Melt remaining butter in a 10" skillet over medium heat. Add truffles; cook until hot, about 30 seconds. To assemble burgers, place a patty on each bun bottom; drizzle with a little sauce. Top each burger with a slice of foie gras and a few truffle slices. Sprinkle salt over the top; add top half of bun.

**Pairing Note** The Brezza Cannubi 2004 (\$84), a barolo from Italy's Piedmont region, has an acidity and dry finish that stand up to a rich burger. —A.Z.



## PATTY MELT

MAKES 6 SANDWICHES

Some say that the patty melt—a





*A practical class at Le Cordon Bleu, Ottawa, Canada*

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*Meryl Streep as Julia Child at Le Cordon Bleu Paris*



**IN THEATERS AUGUST 7**



See Le Cordon Bleu In *Julie & Julia* at  
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## BURGERS

griddled sandwich of ground beef, caramelized onions, cheese, and rye bread (see page 76) —isn't technically a burger, because it has no bun. We love it just the same.

- 1½ lbs. ground beef**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- 5 tbsp. canola oil**
- 2 yellow onions, halved and thinly sliced**
- 12 slices rye bread**
- 12 thin slices cheddar, swiss, or american cheese**
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened**

**1** Season the beef with salt and pepper. Divide meat into six ¼"-thick patties that are slightly wider and longer than the bread.

**2** Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onions, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and browned, about 12 minutes. Transfer the onions to a bowl; wipe out skillet. Working in 3 batches, heat 1 tbsp. oil in skillet over high heat. Add 2 burger patties; cook, flipping once, until well browned, about 4 minutes total. Transfer patties to a plate.

**3** Top each of 6 bread slices with some of the onions, a cheese slice, and a burger patty. Top each burger with a cheese slice and a piece of bread. Using a table knife, spread butter over the top and bottom of each sandwich.

**4** Heat a 12" nonstick skillet over medium heat. Working in 3 batches, cook sandwiches, flipping once, until golden brown and hot, about 6 minutes.

**Pairing Note** The sweet onions and earthy rye bread in this sandwich call for a fruity Belgian-style beer, like Ommegang Abbey Ale (\$8 for 750 milliliters), from New York State. —A.Z.



## LAMB BURGER

MAKES 2 BURGERS

Parsley, dill, cumin, and garlic give these burgers (see page 63) a lively flavor reminiscent of a lamb gyro's. The burger is enhanced by a tangy topping of feta, arugula, olives, and sun-dried tomatoes. The recipe is based on one from Michael Psilakis, the chef at Anthos, a New York City restaurant.

- 2 tbsp. plus 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 3 tbsp. minced yellow onion**
- 12 oz. ground lamb**
- 4 oz. ground pork**
- 2 tsp. dijon mustard**
- 1 tsp. each finely chopped parsley, mint, and dill**
- 1 tsp. dried Greek oregano**
- ½ tsp. ground coriander**
- ½ tsp. ground cumin**
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- 1 scallion, chopped**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- ⅓ cup crumbled feta cheese**
- 10 leaves baby arugula**
- 8 black olives in oil, drained, pitted, and roughly chopped**
- 8 sun-dried tomatoes in oil, drained and roughly chopped**
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice**
- 2 hamburger buns, toasted**

**1** Heat 2 tbsp. oil in an 8" skillet over high heat. Add onions; cook until browned, about 6 minutes. Transfer onions to a plate; let cool. In a bowl, mix onions, lamb, pork, mustard, herbs, spices, garlic, scallions, and salt and pepper. Form meat into two 1"-thick patties; set aside.

**2** Prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill to medium-high (or heat a tablespoon of canola oil in

a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat). Grill burgers, flipping once, until browned and cooked to desired doneness, about 10 minutes for medium rare. In a small bowl, combine feta, arugula, olives, and sun-dried tomatoes; toss with the remaining oil and lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Place each burger on the bottom half of a bun and top each with the vegetables and bun top.

**Pairing Note** A juicy, spicy red like the Cristom Vineyards Syrah 2005 (\$30), from Oregon, complements this lamb burger, with its vibrant flavor. —A.Z.



## SID'S ONION BURGER

MAKES 6 BURGERS

These burgers consist of beef that is pressed onto the griddle along with paper-thin slices of onion and seared until crisp. They're based on the ones served at Sid's Diner, a restaurant in El Reno, Oklahoma (see page 67).

- 4 tbsp. canola oil**
- 1 lb. ground beef, gently formed into 6 balls**
- 2 medium yellow onions, very thinly sliced with a mandoline or a sharp knife and divided into 6 equal portions**
- Kosher salt, to taste**
- 6 slices american cheese**
- 6 hamburger buns, toasted**

Working in 2 batches, heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add 3 beef balls and, using the back of a spatula, press down on them until they're thin; cook for 1 minute. Top each patty with a portion of the onions; season with salt. Press onions into the meat and cook for 1 minute more. Flip burgers; flatten with the spatula. Place a cheese

slice on each patty and let melt while onions and meat brown. Serve on buns.

**Pairing Note** This burger benefits from a dark, sweet beer, like St. Peter's Old-Style Porter (\$38 for 12 bottles), from a brewery in Suffolk, England. —A.Z.



## PIMENTO CHEESE BURGER

MAKES 4 BURGERS

Pimento cheese is a popular burger topping in and around Columbia, South Carolina (see page 76). The cheese gives so much flavor to the burger that you won't need ketchup.

- 4 oz. grated sharp yellow cheddar cheese**
- 3 tbsp. mayonnaise**
- 1 tbsp. diced pimentos**
- 1 tbsp. grated onion**
- ½ tsp. worcestershire**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- 1½ lbs. ground beef, formed into 4 medium-size patties**
- 4 hamburger buns, toasted**
- Iceberg lettuce, for garnish**
- 4 slices tomato, for garnish**

**1** In a bowl, combine cheese, mayonnaise, pimentos, grated onion, and worcestershire; season with salt and pepper. Set pimento cheese aside.

**2** Season patties with salt and pepper. Prepare a medium-hot charcoal fire or heat a gas grill to medium-high (or heat a tablespoon of canola oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat). Grill burgers, flipping once, until cooked to desired doneness, about 10 minutes for medium rare. Spread 2 tbsp. pimento cheese over each burger; cover and let melt. Serve burgers on buns with lettuce and tomato.





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## BURGERS

## HOMEMADE SESAME SEED BUNS

MAKES 12 BUNS

These soft rolls (pictured on page 78) are great all-purpose burger buns.

- 1 ¼-oz. package active dry yeast
- 1⅓ cups milk, heated to 115°
- 1½ tsp. plus 2 tbsp. sugar
- 4 cups flour
- 1¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, cut into ½" cubes, softened
- Canola oil, for greasing
- 3 tsp. sesame seeds

① In the bowl of a mixer fitted with a paddle, stir together yeast, milk, and 1½ tsp. sugar; let foam. Stir in remaining sugar, flour, salt, and egg. Mix on low speed until dough forms. Replace paddle with dough hook; add butter; knead on medium-high speed until dough pulls away from sides of bowl, about 8 minutes. Transfer dough to an oiled bowl; cover with plastic wrap. Let rest in a warm place until doubled in size, about 2 hours.

W For a recipe for a Cuban-style hamburger, visit [SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE122](http://SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE122)

② Heat oven to 400°. Divide dough into 12 portions; shape each into a tight ball. Place balls on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Lightly brush balls with oil; cover loosely with plastic wrap. Let rise for 1½ hours.

③ Uncover dough and, using a spray bottle filled with water, moisten dough; sprinkle each ball with ¼ tsp. sesame seeds. Bake, rotating once, until golden brown, 18–20 minutes. Let cool.

## TRUFFLED BRIOCHE BUNS

MAKES 10 BUNS

Flavored with shallots and black truffles, these buns (pictured on page 78) fancy up any burger.

- 1½ cups red wine
- 1 cup minced shallots
- 1½ cups whole milk

- 6¾ cups flour, plus more
- 2 tbsp. active dry yeast
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tbsp. plus 1½ tsp. sea salt
- 3 eggs plus 1 beaten egg yolk
- ¾ cup unsalted butter, cubed and softened
- 1 oz. black truffle, minced (optional)
- 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper

① Bring wine and shallots to a boil in a 12" skillet. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until wine evaporates, about 15 minutes. Transfer shallots to a bowl; chill. Meanwhile, heat ½ cup milk in a small saucepan over medium heat to 115°. Remove from heat; whisk in ½ cup flour and yeast. Cover with plastic wrap; set aside to let foam.

② In bowl of a mixer fitted with a dough hook, add 6¼ cups flour, sugar, and salt; mix on low speed. Add remaining milk and 3 eggs; mix on low speed. Turn off machine; scrape down sides of bowl with a spatula. With machine on low, add butter, little by little, until smooth. Add yeast mixture; mix until smooth, adding a little flour if necessary, about 8 minutes. Transfer dough to a surface dusted with flour. Knead in shallot mixture and truffles. Transfer dough to a bowl greased with the oil; turn dough to coat. Cover bowl with plastic wrap; let rise at room temperature until dough doubles in size, about 2 hours.

③ Heat oven to 375°. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper; set aside. Punch down dough; transfer to a floured surface. Form dough into 10 balls; divide balls between baking sheets, leaving 3" between each. Loosely cover dough with plastic wrap; let rise for 30 minutes. Brush dough balls with the egg yolk; sprinkle with pepper. Bake, rotating sheets halfway through and moving them from top rack to bottom rack and from front to back, until buns are golden, about 15 minutes. Let cool.

## UMAMI KETCHUP

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

Umami, a savory taste associated with foods like aged cheese and mushrooms, is the signature flavor of this delicious condiment (pictured on page 74), which is served at the LA restaurant Umami Burger.

- 1 28-oz. can whole peeled tomatoes
- 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- ½ cup cider vinegar
- 1½ cup packed dark brown sugar
- 2 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 tsp. tamari
- 2 tsp. worcestershire
- 2 tsp. oyster sauce
- 5 anchovies, finely chopped and mashed into a paste

① Purée tomatoes in a blender; set aside. Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat. Add onions; cook until soft, about 8 minutes. Add tomato purée, vinegar, brown sugar, tomato paste, and salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until thick, about 1 hour.

② Purée cooked tomato mixture in a blender. Transfer to a bowl; season with salt and stir in remaining ingredients. Cover and chill before using.

## ZUCCHINI PICKLES

MAKES 4 CUPS

These pickled zucchini rounds (pictured on page 69), from chef Judy Rodgers of Zuni Café in San Francisco, California, make a great alternative to the pickle spear.

- 3 medium zucchini (about 1 lb.), cut into paper-thin rounds
- 1 small yellow onion, halved and cut into paper-thin slices
- 2 tbsp. kosher salt
- 2 cups cider vinegar
- 1 cup sugar
- 1½ tsp. dried mustard
- 1½ tsp. yellow mustard seeds
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric

① In a shallow bowl, combine zucchini, onions, salt, 5 cups water, and 3 cups

ice cubes. Stir until salt has dissolved; let sit at room temperature for 1 hour. Drain vegetables; pat dry with towels.

② Put vinegar, sugar, dried mustard, mustard seeds, and turmeric into a 2-qt. saucepan; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer for 3 minutes. Let cool. Transfer zucchini mixture to a 1-qt. jar and add vinegar mixture; stir. Cover; refrigerate for 1 day before using. Will keep for 3 weeks in the refrigerator.

## MAIL-ORDER BURGERS

Several high-quality meat purveyors known for mail-order steaks also ship frozen ground-beef patties that make excellent hamburgers. • The hefty ten-ounce USDA Prime patties from Allen Brothers in Chicago have a rich, steaklike flavor. At \$5 apiece, they're a splurge, so you might as well go all out: try them with luxe toppings like shaved truffles. • For \$3 each, the La Cense ranch in Montana sells patties of a more standard size—six ounces each—that are made from grass-fed Black Angus steer; the burgers have a fine, delicate flavor. • Vande Rose Farms, an Iowa-based company specializing in well-marbled Hereford beef, produces a thick six-ounce patty (\$2.75 each) that would be our choice for cookouts. • We also like the one-third-pound patties (\$2.45 each) from Rocky Mountain Organic Meats in Wyoming. Made from naturally raised steer, the burgers have a clean flavor and pair well with rich but fresh-tasting toppings like avocado. • Finally, for aficionados of the square burger, there are the one-third-pound square patties from Dakota Natural Beef, a company based in Salem, South Dakota. At less than \$2 each, they cook up with a nicely browned crust; they're excellent for satisfying everyday burger cravings. —Ben Mims







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**E**VEN WHEN THE yellow August sun shines its strongest, the air is cool on Cape Breton Island, and wind is a constant. It tugs at the washing outside Archie and Eva Murphy's shingle-sided house and pulls at their red-and-white Canadian flag. It whips through their apple orchard and tousles the lettuces in the vegetable patch. It may blow in fresh and sweet off the

Atlantic, but a local will tell you that it can roll an 18-wheel truck on the open road or carry a *King Lear* thunderstorm across the wet green fields of Nova Scotia's eastern headlands.

The storm that rattled the Murphys' house last night has made the kitchen feel all the cozier this morning. Water boils for coffee and tea, and Eva tips a jar of her crumbly oatcakes—just sweet and salty enough—onto gold-rimmed plates set out on the big pine table. Soon the kitchen is crowded with family; everyone slathers the oatcakes and pieces of toast with Eva's rhubarb-strawberry jam. Two grandkids tear through the kitchen. "Scallywags," Eva says, pretending to be put out.

Soon Eva is busy making her cod cakes, kneading the fish and potato filling by hand. "Fingers were made before forks," she says. Later, she'll fry up a few dozen and serve them for lunch with a sweet and sour relish and bowls of creamy corn chowder.

Now grown up, with families of their own, four of the five Murphy children live (*continued on page 90*)

**Archie Murphy, a third-generation resident of Cape Breton Island, with his granddaughter Lauren.**







# AUGUST'S FEAST

The end of summer brings a family back  
to Canada's remote Cape Breton Island

BY SASHA CHAPMAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY LANDON NORDEMAN









Denis Cormier's brother Réal tends to the nets aboard his fishing boat off the Cape Breton coast. Facing page, cod cakes with chowchow relish (see page 95 for a recipe).



(continued from page 86) “away”—off the island—scattered across Canada like so many grains of wheat. But the tide turns in August when children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews, cousins and friends, come home for a summer vacation. At this time of year, Cape Breton kitchens are busier than at Christmas. Eva spends her days rolling out thick dough for bannock bread and baking up cornmeal cakes. Five generations of Murphys have eaten in this kitchen, mostly off the land they lived on.

ARCHIE GETS UP WITH the sun each morning, as his father and grandfather did before him. Now he throws on a green plaid shirt and trudges over the hill to tend his vegetable patch, trailed by his wide-eyed four-year-old granddaughter Lauren. They walk past the old forge where Archie’s parents used to shoe their horses, past the apple orchard, past the barn where Dolly, a 20-year-old mare, gazes balefully at the ginger barn cats.

Archie’s garden, just a quarter acre, produces more food than he and Eva could ever eat. The root cellar still holds a few odd jars of last summer’s pickled mustard beans and plenty of last year’s potatoes. Archie, like many Cape Breton natives, has a soft spot for his blue potatoes—the same kind his father grew. Corn and beans may have been the staples of New England, to the south, but for the Scottish and Irish settlers struggling to survive the harsh Nova Scotia winters, the potato was the staple. A meal still isn’t a meal without them. “I can never fill up on bread alone,” Archie likes to say.

Archie digs up some of the potatoes and plunks them into

SASHA CHAPMAN is a Toronto-based food writer for the *Globe and Mail*.







an old Maxwell House coffee can to take to his daughter Charlene, who lives two fields over. Later, she'll turn the tubers into a colorful potato salad for the big family crab boil at her house tonight.

Charlene's husband, Denis Cormier, will look after the crabs. While the Celts on Cape Breton Island were mostly farmers, the French-speaking Acadians (those progenitors of Louisiana's Cajuns) were fishermen. Denis's father used to row out to sea alone in his shallow wooden dory and haul in 200 traps a day. Back then, lobster and cod were king; these days Denis's two brothers earn a living fishing mostly for mackerel and snow crab. Some locals prefer the latter, with its subtle sweetness, to lobster. Today, Denis meets his brothers down at the docks and then returns home to clean two dozen crabs and simmer a huge pot of dried red kidney beans and "pork scraps", the thick-cut pieces of salted pork back sold at the market in the nearby village of Chéticamp.

Later, as dusk settles over Denis and Charlene's sloping fields, Denis lights the torches on the veranda. Several generations of Murphys start to stream in. Before long, the house is packed. It's impossible to get a sample of everything without going back for seconds: tender crabmeat served with nothing but salt, pepper, and just a drop or two of vinegar; potato salad brightened with scallions and radishes; the slow-simmered beans, sweetened with molasses.

The meal winds down late. The Murphy children slip into telling old stories, the same ones they told last summer. Eva and Archie sit quietly, smiling. At summer meals like this, it's as if their children had never gone "away".

**A family crab boil at Denis Cormier and Charlene Murphy's house, left, as a summer storm rolls in off the Atlantic Ocean.**









Corn chowder garnished with bacon and basil (see page 95 for a recipe). Facing page, Archie Murphy in his family's stable, home to a 20-year-old mare named Dolly and a few ginger cats, including Flower, pictured.



## RHUBARB-STRAWBERRY JAM

MAKES 3 CUPS

Rhubarb, a reddish-pink vegetable that grows in celery-like stalks and is harvested through the late summer, has a pleasing tartness, so it pairs well with sweet strawberries in a jam (pictured at right).

- 5 cups rhubarb (about 1 1/4 lbs.), cut into 3/4" x 1/2" cubes
- 2 cups hulled and quartered strawberries (about 1/2 lb.)
- 2 1/4 cups sugar
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

❶ Combine the ingredients in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to medium-low; cook, stirring occasionally, until the rhubarb breaks down and the jam has thickened, about 1 hour. To determine whether jam has set, place a small spoonful on a chilled plate; if the dollop of jam holds firm and doesn't get runny around the edges, it is ready for canning. If it runs, continue to cook for another 10 minutes.

❷ Meanwhile, submerge three 1-cup canning jars, along with their lids and ring bands, in a large pot of boiling water and sterilize over high heat for 10 minutes. Transfer sterilized jars, lids, and bands to a clean dish towel. Fill each jar with hot jam, leaving at least 1/4" of space at the top. Wipe jar rims with a clean dish towel, place lids on jars, and secure ring bands.

❸ Transfer filled jars to a canning rack; place rack in a pot of gently boiling water so that jars are submerged by at least 1"; let boil for 10 minutes. Transfer jars, set at least 1" apart, to a dish towel and let cool, undisturbed, for 24 hours. To test that jars have properly sealed, unscrew bands and lift each jar by the edge of the lid; if the lid holds, the jar is sealed. If it loosens, jar is not fully sealed, and jam should be refrigerated and used within 2 weeks. Sealed jars will keep, in a cool, dark place, for up to a year.





## CAPE BRETON ISLAND



## COD CAKES

SERVES 4

Be sure to let the cod cakes firm up in the refrigerator before you fry them, so that they'll hold their shape.

- 6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 ribs celery, finely chopped
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 2 russet potatoes (about 1 lb.), peeled and cut into 1/4" cubes
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 lb. boneless skinless cod filets
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 cup dried bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped fresh dill
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 egg yolk, beaten
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- Chowchow, for serving
- (optional; see bottom right)

1 Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 12" skillet over medium heat. Add celery, onions, and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 8 minutes. Transfer celery-onion mixture to a large bowl and set aside.

*A recipe for Charlene Murphy's potato salad at [SAVEUR.COM](http://SAVEUR.COM) / ISSUE 122*

2 Put potatoes into a 4-qt. saucepan and cover with salted water by 1". Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium, and simmer until potatoes are tender, about 15 minutes. Drain; transfer half the potatoes to a plate. Set aside to let cool. Transfer remaining potatoes to a bowl and mash with a fork. Transfer mashed potatoes to reserved bowl of

onion mixture; set aside to let cool.

3 Season cod with salt and pepper. Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add cod and cook, turning once with a metal spatula, until cooked through, 8-10 minutes. Transfer cod to a plate and let cool. Break cod into 1" chunks and set aside.

4 Add bread crumbs, mayonnaise, herbs, egg yolk, and lemon juice to the potato-onion mixture and stir vigorously to combine. Add the reserved cubed potatoes and the cod and mix gently to combine. Using your hands, divide the mixture into 8 equal portions and form into 3"-wide cakes (use a 3" ring mold if you have one). Transfer cakes to a wax paper-lined baking sheet, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 30 minutes, until firm. Working in 2 batches, heat 1 tbsp. oil and 2 tbsp. butter in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add cod cakes and cook, flipping once, until golden brown, about 8 minutes. Transfer cakes to a serving platter; serve with chowchow, if you like.



## CORN CHOWDER

SERVES 8

This summer chowder is thickened not with flour but by puréeing a little of the soup, which is then stirred back in.

- 8 ears fresh corn, shucked
- 8 strips bacon, chopped
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped fresh thyme
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 ribs celery, finely chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- 6 cups milk

- 3 medium new potatoes (about 1 1/2 lbs.), peeled and cut into 1/2" cubes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh basil, for garnish

1 Working over a large bowl, slice the corn kernels off the cob, scraping the cob with the knife to extract the flavorful juices. Halve 5 of the bare corn cobs crosswise, discarding the rest. Set corn and cobs aside.

2 Heat the bacon in a 6-qt. pot over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until crisp, about 12 minutes. Reserve 3 tbsp. bacon for garnish, leaving the remaining bacon in the pot. Add butter, thyme, garlic, celery, onions, and bay leaf. Cover the pot and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions soften, about 6 minutes. Add the reserved corn kernels and cobs, milk, and potatoes. Cover, bring chowder to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are tender, about 25 minutes. Skim any foam from the surface of the soup. Discard the cobs and bay leaf; transfer 1 1/2 cups of the soup to a blender, and purée. Stir purée into the chowder to thicken it. Season with salt and pepper and serve garnished with reserved bacon and basil.



## CHOWCHOW

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

This tart-sweet relish, which makes use of a bumper crop of late-summer produce, is the perfect condiment for the cod cakes shown above left. This recipe is based on one in *Simple Pleasures from Our Maritime Kitchens* by Julie V. Watson (Raincoast Books, 2002).

- 1 1/2 lbs. green tomatoes, cored and finely chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 rib celery, finely chopped
- 1/2 green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1/2 red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- 2 tbsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1 1/2 tsp. dry mustard
- 1 1/2 tsp. yellow mustard seeds
- 1 tsp. celery seeds
- 1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 1/4 tsp. ground coriander

1 Toss tomatoes, onions, celery, and peppers in a large bowl with salt; cover with plastic wrap and let sit at room temperature for 4 hours or overnight. Transfer vegetables to a sieve and press to extract excess juices; discard juices.

2 Transfer vegetables to a 6-qt. saucepan and add remaining ingredients. Cover, bring mixture to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are very soft, about 2 1/2 hours. Transfer relish to a jar and let cool. Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

## GREAT RELISH

The relish of pickled tomatoes, celery, and mustard known as chowchow has long been popular in Canada's Maritime provinces; it is likely a descendant of the English relish known as piccalilli. Many cooks make their own (see recipe, left), but others, including Eva Murphy of Cape Breton Island, swear by Graves Chow Chow (pictured). This smooth relish, less sugary than your standard American pickle relish, has a fresh, sour-sweet taste and goes well with grilled salmon, hot dogs, turkey sandwiches, or any food that calls for a tangy counterpoint. (See *THE PANTRY*, page 108, for a source.)  
—Ben Mims





# O'AHU

## MARKET CULTURE

More than just fun in the sun for food lovers, O'AHU is a paradise of *ono* (delicious) food adventures. This enchanting island offers a dazzling ARRAY OF CUISINES – plus EATING AND SHOPPING MECCAS guaranteed to titillate the taste buds.

A visual and edible feast awaits the food adventurer within a five-mile radius of Waikīkī – from open-air farmers' markets to ethnic supermarkets and gourmet boutiques. See just-caught fish right off a longline

boat (they'll be served later in a local dining spot). Fresh greens, common and uncommon, will make you yearn for a kitchen counter nearby. Exotic tropical fruit will forever change your fruit desires. And if there's something you're dying to taste, especially from Asia and points east, you'll find it on O'ahu.





## SHOP THE STATE'S PREMIER FARMERS' MARKETS

The popularity of farmers' markets has skyrocketed in recent years, here and on the Mainland, spurred by the knowledge that fresh, locally produced food is better for you – and the environment. In Honolulu, several must-visit markets organized by the Hawai'i Farm Bureau Federation showcase the freshest and best of the local crop.

The Saturday Farmers' Market at Kapi'olani Community College – known as KCC, and located on the slopes of Diamond Head – is the state's premier open-air market for island-



grown and -produced foods. Thousands of Honolulu residents get their morning cup of freshly brewed local coffee at KCC, nibble on honey-sweetened oatcakes, taste hot-off-the-grill range-fed burgers, indulge in crisp fried green tomatoes, or bite into a macadamia nut cookie.

You'll see top-notch chefs here, like Ed Kenney of Town and Downtown restaurants, trolling for just-picked sea asparagus, hearts of palm or pioppini mushrooms that can star on his organic, local-inspired menu. He's always on the lookout for the freshest of delicate salad greens, fragrant herbs, robust leafy kales, crisp bok choy, and vine-ripe tomatoes. When luscious mangoes, rambutan, and dragon fruit are in season, the chef is in heaven.

Nalo Farms owner Dean Okimoto, one of the organizers of the KCC market, mans his booth faithfully, interacting with the loyal customers who come for his trademark Nalo Greens, a highly regarded salad mix on Honolulu restaurant menus. He keeps a watchful eye on the tropical flowers and plants, orchids, breads, pastries, and other treasures found under the tents of this popular community market. KCC is also the place where you can find a taste of Hawai'i to take home: Kona coffee, macadamia nuts, honey, preserves, snack foods, fruit syrups, and more.



### EARLY MORNING FISH ADVENTURE

Good food on O'ahu always includes fresh fish. And nowhere are the fish more ready for their close-up than at the Honolulu Fish Auction at Pier 38. Thousands of pounds, primarily fresh 'ahi (tuna), are sold here to discerning buyers who supply restaurants, hotels, and retail venues in Hawai'i and abroad.

Visitors to the fish auction are welcome, starting at 5:30 a.m., six days a week. Peruse the longline boats on the dock, just in from a couple of weeks on the wide expanse of Pacific Ocean. After being unloaded, weighed, and tagged, the catch is then moved onto the auction floor, where a huddle of buyers moves along rows of palettes displaying the iced fish. Bigeye and yellowfin 'ahi, usually savored raw as sashimi, are ubiquitous here. Mahimahi, monchong, striped marlin, swordfish, snappers, opah, and other species add to the color and character of this lively auction, where bidding can be fierce when top-quality fish are on the block. If your craving won't wait until dinnertime, head next door to Nico's. The local-style breakfast is sure to please: fresh off the auction floor, fish cooked and served with fried rice and eggs. Or stop at nearby Tamashiro Market, Honolulu's premier fish and seafood emporium. This small, neighborhood spot is known for its vast selection of poke – at least two dozen different versions of the islands' favorite *pūpū* (hors



d'oeuvre): bite-size, raw, seasoned fish and seafood. Visitors to Hawai'i simply must try poke – and Tamashiro's makes some of the best.

### A VISIT TO ASIA IN HONOLULU

Every visiting epicure should see Honolulu's Chinatown, a vibrant downtown district with an abundance of ethnic flavors and adventures for the food lover. Established around 1870 this 20-square-block cornucopia of fish markets, grocery stores, fruit and vegetable stands, and bakeries is also awash in herbalists, acupuncturists, jewelers, fabric and clothing shops, video stores, restaurants, and shopping malls.

Your mouth will water at the abundance: chestnut brown roast ducks hanging alongside red glazed barbecued pork in storefront windows, crisp Asian greens and wing beans, tree-ripe papayas and mangoes. Noodle makers scurry about in flour-dusted shops as hungry diners get their fill of dim sum, steaming bowls of pho, pad thai, or adobo at thriving restaurants.

Wander down Chinatown's main street, Maunakea, and stop at the many lei stands where floral artistry is at its finest. Visit O'ahu Market, more than a century old, still bustling with some of Honolulu's best fishmongers and roast pork specialists. At Kekaulike Market you'll find a variety of ethnic specialties and the best of Asian vegetables. When hunger hits, take your pick among Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese lunch plates at Maunakea Marketplace's food court.

Beyond Chinatown, Honolulu boasts a number of ethnic specialty shops where ingredients and prepared foods will transport you to their country of origin. There's the Asian Grocery store for Southeast Asian specialties and Mercado de la Raza for Latino selections. Marukai and Shirokiya offer a wealth of Japanese ingredients; Palama Market will fulfill Korean grocery lists. And if you have a craving for some Italian olive oil or caviar, you'll find it at R. Field at Foodland Beretania. It's all part of the unique, cosmopolitan food scene in Honolulu.

Then you can return to the Mainland with a trove of exotic memories and succulent food ideas to last a lifetime.

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IN THE SAVEUR

# KITCHEN

Discoveries and Techniques from Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman



## Crunch on These

**L**OOK AT THEM: golden, salt strewn, the sum of so much more than potatoes and hot oil. Without these classic sides, the great American burgers we celebrate in “Burger Nation” (page 55) would be incomplete, forlorn. French fries (pictured top left) are the classic burger accompaniment. The best ones emerge from the fryer crisp on the outside and fluffy on the inside, a miracle of

thermodynamics. Their salty crispness is the perfect counterpoint to a hamburger’s meaty lusciousness. A fancier alternative, pommes soufflées (top right), like the ones served at New York City’s ‘21’ Club, are air-puffed wonders flamboyant enough to measure up to a burger adorned with the likes of truffles and foie gras. Any old sandwich might come with potato chips, but only a big, juicy

burger is worthy of the translucently thin but wonderfully earthy skin-on version pictured above (front and center). Finally, our favorite: a delicate haystack of shoestring potatoes, lovely to behold and light and crunchy. On the following page, you’ll find recipes, tips, and tools for making all these delicious variations on the fried potato theme. (Burgers optional.) —Beth Kracklauer



## KITCHEN

# The Ultimate Fries

The addition of fried potatoes makes a burger a meal. These four potato side dishes are our all-time favorites.

## FRENCH FRIES

SERVES 2

Double frying is the secret to outstanding fries. The first plunge in oil cooks the potatoes through for a fluffy texture; the second one, at a higher temperature, forms a crisp exterior.

**Canola or peanut oil, for frying**

- 2 large russet potatoes (about 1 lb. 10 oz.), unpeeled, cut into 1/4"-thick sticks**  
**Kosher salt, to taste**

**1** Pour oil to a depth of 2" into a 6-qt. heavy-bottomed dutch oven and heat over medium-high heat until the temperature registers 375° on a deep-fry thermometer. Add all the potatoes and cook, turning occasionally and maintaining an oil temperature of 325° (adding the potatoes will cause the temperature to drop), until pale and tender, about 8 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer fries to a rack set over a rimmed baking sheet and refrigerate until chilled, about 1 hour.

**2** Increase oil temperature to 385°. Working in small batches, add potatoes again; cook, stirring until golden brown and crisp, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer fries to a rack set over a rimmed baking sheet. Season fries with salt.

## POMMES SOUFFLÉES

SERVES 2

A kind of magic happens in the making of pommes soufflées, a specialty of the '21 Club in New York City. During a second, hotter round of frying, steam trapped inside the potatoes inflates them into delicate balloons.

- 3 russet potatoes (about 2 lbs. 6 oz.), peeled**  
**Canola or peanut oil, for frying**  
**Kosher salt, to taste**

**1** Working with 1 potato at a time,

cut 1/4" off each side to square the potato into a rectangle. Rest potato on a flat side. Using a paring knife, trim the potato into the shape of a football. (See "Frying: Tools and Tips", below right.) Using a mandoline or a sharp knife, slice potatoes lengthwise to 1/8" thickness and transfer to a bowl filled with cold water.

**2** Set two 6-qt. heavy-bottomed dutch ovens over 2 burners. Pour oil to a depth of 2" into both. Heat the first over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 320° and the second until a deep-fry thermometer reads 400°. Drain potatoes and pat dry. Working in batches, add potatoes to the first pot and cook, maintaining a temperature of 275° (adding potatoes will cause temperature to drop) and flipping potatoes occasionally with a slotted spoon until they're blistered and translucent, about 5 minutes. Working in batches, transfer potatoes to the second pot and cook, flipping occasionally with a spoon and maintaining a temperature of 375°, until potatoes are puffed and browned, about 5 minutes. Transfer pommes soufflées to a rack set over a rimmed baking sheet; season with salt and serve.

## POTATO CHIPS

SERVES 2-4

A brief rinse under cold water rids raw potato chips of excess starch that might otherwise cause them to stick together in the frying oil.

**Canola or peanut oil, for frying**

- 1 russet potato (about 12 oz.), cut crosswise on a mandoline or by hand into 1/16"-thick rounds**  
**Kosher salt, to taste**

Pour oil to a depth of 2" into a 6-qt. heavy-bottomed dutch oven and heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer registers 375°. Put potatoes into a strainer and rinse

under cold water for 1 minute. Drain potatoes and transfer to paper towels; pat dry. Working in batches, fry potatoes, stirring constantly with a slotted spoon, until light golden brown and crisp, 1-2 minutes. Using the slotted spoon, transfer chips to a rack set over a rimmed baking sheet. Season with salt.

## SHOESTRING FRIES

SERVES 2

Most mandolines (see "Frying: Tools and Tips", below) come with a julienne attachment that will produce perfect, quick-frying shoestrings every time.

**Canola or peanut oil, for frying**

- 2 large russet potatoes (about 1 lb. 10 oz.), peeled**  
**Kosher salt, to taste**

Pour oil to a depth of 2" into a 6-qt.

heavy-bottomed dutch oven and heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer registers 375°. Meanwhile, julienne potatoes lengthwise using the narrowest setting of a mandoline with a julienne attachment (see page 108) or by hand with a sharp knife; transfer potatoes to a strainer and rinse them briefly under cold water for 1 minute so that they won't stick together as they fry in the oil. Drain potatoes, transfer to kitchen towels, and pat dry. Working in 4 batches, fry potatoes, stirring constantly with a slotted spoon and maintaining an oil temperature of at least 350° (adding the potatoes will cause the temperature to drop), until potatoes are light golden brown and crisp, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer fried potatoes to a rack set over a rimmed baking sheet. Season potatoes with salt; serve.

## Frying: Tools and Tips



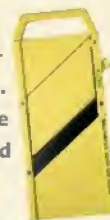
The most important tool for frying is the thermometer. If your oil is too hot, the potatoes will brown too much on the outside and remain undercooked in the middle. If the oil isn't hot enough, too much of it will penetrate the potatoes, leaving them greasy. A deep-fry thermometer attached to the rim of the pot takes the guesswork out. (See THE PANTRY, page 108, for sources.)

We use refined canola or peanut oil for everyday frying; both have a high smoke point, a neutral flavor, and a reasonable price. Sometimes we take a cue from professional chefs and add to our frying oil a few tablespoons of rendered beef, bacon, or duck fat—or some nutty-tasting unrefined peanut oil (right; available at Whole Foods)—for a deeper flavor.



Making perfect pommes soufflées comes down to careful shaping and slicing. Cutting the potatoes into a football shape (left) with a sharp paring knife makes them easier to slice and to cook and yields elegant-looking fries. Slicing to 1/8" thickness leaves just enough moisture to build a good head of steam during frying, forming an air pocket inside as the outside crisps and sets. For an illustrated step-by-step guide on how to shape the potatoes, go to [SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE122](http://SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE122).

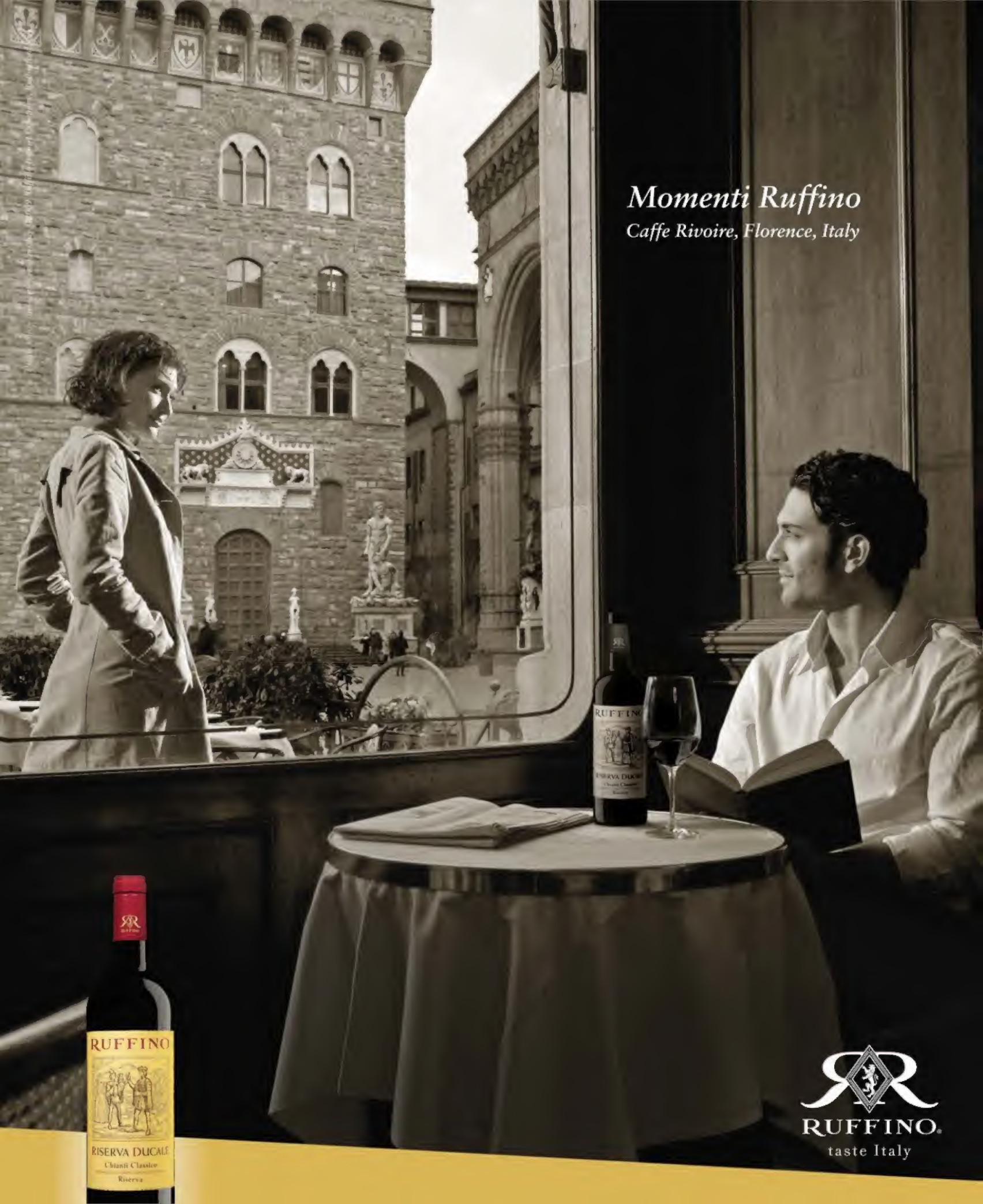
A mandoline is helpful for slicing potatoes to a uniform thickness for potato chips, pommes soufflées, and shoestring fries. Japanese-style plastic models (right) sell for about half the price of heavier, stainless-steel ones, are easy to clean and sharpen, and will withstand years of use.





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## KITCHEN



## Making the Perfect Patty

A lot of cooks take pains to obtain top-notch hamburger meat, toppings, condiments, and buns only to relegate the crucial step of making the patties to an afterthought. There's an art to preparing a hamburger patty. Fortunately, it's one that can be reduced to a few straightforward guidelines. **1** A pat of cold butter enclosed in the center of the patty bastes and flavors the meat while it cooks. Be sure to seal the butter pat in completely. **2** Don't pack the meat too much: overworking it can cause the burger to become mealy and overly dense. Gather the meat into a loose ball and set it on a work surface. Curl the palms of your hands around the sides of the patty and work it back and forth in a rotating motion so that the sides of the patty flatten slightly. Then gently press down on the top of the patty with the flat of your hand. (A note on size: thick is good, but there's a limit; any burger patty weighing more than eight ounces when raw will overwhelm your average bun.) **3** We found that an ice cream scoop gave us a loosely packed portion perfectly sized for being squashed into a thin, old-school skillet burger. **4** Thick burger patties tend to puff up in the middle while they cook. Making a depression in the top of the patty using the back of a measuring spoon, or just your thumb, helps a burger hold its shape. —Hunter Lewis



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## KITCHEN

## Finest for Fries

**W**HEREAS MANY OTHER deep-fried foods acquire a crunchy exterior from breading or batter, most potatoes already possess the right amount of starch and water to become crisp in hot oil all by themselves. The best potatoes for making french fries are the same ones typically used for baking; in both cases, a high starch content makes for a fluffy interior. Look for high-starch russets (so called because of their rough, "russeted" skin) or medium-starch cultivars such as yukon golds and kennebecs. To get the most out of these starchy potatoes, store them in a dark, dry place at room temperature; light encourages sprouting, and a wet potato makes a soggy fry. It is important to know that the cold climate inside a refrigerator promotes the conversion of starch to sugar; a potato not stored at room temperature can cause the fry to brown too quickly, before the inside has cooked through. Below are five potatoes that make great chips and fries. (See *THE PANTRY*, page 108, for a source.) —Karen Shimizu

**Russet burbank** The gold standard for french-frying potatoes. Moisture escapes quickly from this spud's coarse, starchy flesh during frying, making for quick-cooking fries with a crisp exterior and a light, fluffy inside.



**Classic russet** Potato breeders continually try to improve on the burbank, which, while delicious, is hard to grow. The classic russet, released last year by University of Idaho agricultural scientists, fries just as beautifully, and has the added advantage of a higher protein content.



**Kennebec** In-N-Out Burger, the California-based chain, uses this thin-skinned potato for its fries, which are firm and light in color thanks to the kennebec's low sugar content. This round potato also yields tasty potato chips.



**Yukon gold** Thick-cut french fries made with yukon golds have an especially moist, almost creamy interior.



**Purple peruvian** This starchy variety produces colorful fries that can range from violet to indigo.







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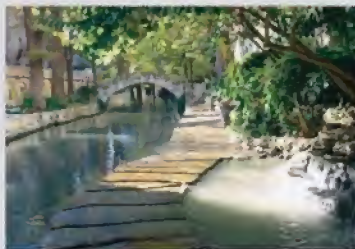
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# SAVEUR MENU

SAVEUR's guide to EVENTS, PROMOTIONS & PRODUCTS



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**Tillamook**  
&  
**SAVEUR**

## Wine & Cheddar Night in the SAVEUR Kitchen

On June 4, SAVEUR and Tillamook Cheese hosted Wine & Cheddar Night in the SAVEUR Kitchen. Led by Wine Director Ania Zawieja, readers were treated to pairings of Tillamook Cheddar and wines from around the world. Learn more about about Tillamook when you visit:

[www.tillamookcheese.com](http://www.tillamookcheese.com)



## Long Live Tales of the Cocktail 2009

Log on to [saveur.com/totc](http://saveur.com/totc) where you'll see top mixologists, bartenders, chefs, and authors from across the country shaking things up at the 7th Annual Tales of the Cocktail event in New Orleans. For photos and highlights of this year's soul-stirring good time, visit our website:

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